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Edition De Luxe

THE WORKS OF

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

"Good-day, my dear lady," said Birotteau flippantly

—*Cesar Birotteau,* page 93

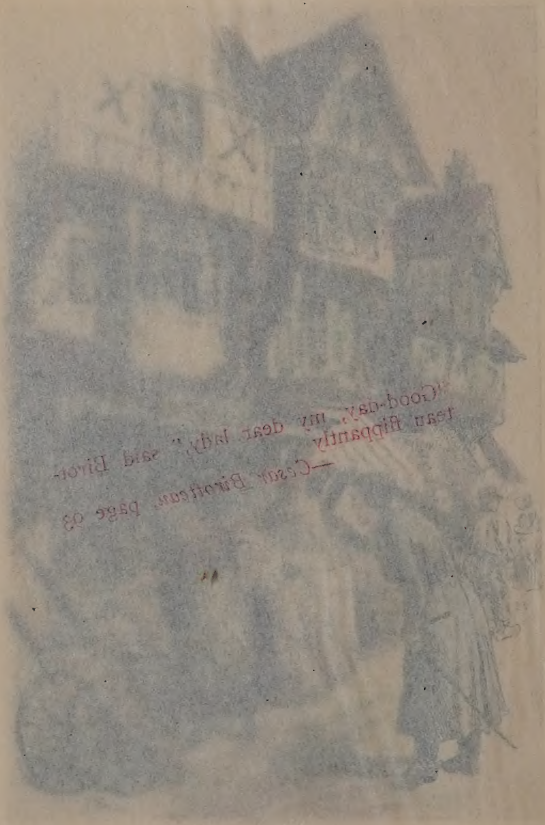
THE RISE AND FALL OF CÉSAR BIROTTEAU

THE MIDDLE CLASSES

With Introduction by

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

John D. Morris and Company
Philadelphia



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THE RISE AND FALL OF CÉSAR BIROTTEAU

AND

THE SECRETS OF A PRINCESS

INTRODUCTION

FEW books of Balzac's have been the subject of more diverse judgment than *César Birotteau.* From the opinion of the unnamed solicitor, who told Madame Serville that it was an invaluable work to consult on bankruptcy, to that of M. Paul Lacroix (beloved of many as the Bibliophile Jacob), that it might be forgiven for the sake of *Le Père Goriot* and the *Peau de Chagrin,* there is not perhaps quite so great a distance as may appear; but other expressions, opposed not merely in form, but in fact, might probably be collected.

As for the unfavorable division of these opinions there is no difficulty in discovering their causes; and there should be little, save in the case of blind partisans, in acknowledging their partial validity. Although the book opens with one of Balzac's most brilliant pieces of actual human observation—the description of the vague and half-delirious terror of waking from a bad dream,—and though the subsequent conversation between César and Constance has the merit of no vulgar curtain-lecture, it soon goes off into one of those endless retrospective narrations which are among the greatest blots on the *Comédie,* which utterly stop the action, and which, in the case of very many readers who are not gifted with the faculty of what may be called literary mountaineering, are very likely to cause the putting down of the book. To this initial difficulty has to be added the choking of the latter part with those bankruptcy details which did so charm the professional mind of Laure Balzac's learned friend, and

which, for unprofessional minds, have something which is very much the reverse of charm. The reader of only moderate athletic powers, who has with difficulty struggled through and up the sloughs and slopes of the previous history of the Birotteau business, is hardly to be blamed if he gives up the attempt in despair after some attempt on the slippery "screes" of commercial law which Balzac has delighted to strew over the higher ground.

Complaints of these drawbacks, I repeat, would be, and are, just. Nevertheless, though the list of the faults of the book is not even yet exhausted, it will be a very great pity if any one is baffled by them and fails to go through to the end. For *César Birotteau* is a book than which none of Balzac's is more thoroughly *vécu,* as his countrymen say, more thoroughly inspired with the personal sympathies and experiences of the author; and this with Balzac was always a guarantee of success. He, too, knew bankruptcy well, and not merely by his studies in the lawyer's office; for though I believe he never actually "passed the court" (even his printing and publishing operations, disastrous as they were, terminated in arrangements), he was face to face with it all his life. He, too, knew the attraction, the fatal attraction of *une bonne affaire,* such as he speaks of in one of his letters—*une bonne affaire qui ne demande que cent mille francs.* He was perfectly capable of buying up all the nuts in Paris in order to make hair-oil of them; I should not be at all surprised if he had actually had in view this very speculation. And he thought he knew the ways of bankers and folk of that kind; though, whether he did or not, the sons of Zeruiah were usually as much too hard for him as they were for Birotteau. Hence there is even in the driest details, even in

the most long-winded *reportage* of the book, the throb of personal interest, the pulse and pant of life.

The action and characters also are interesting, if not, on the whole, quite artistically probable. It will be observed that the hero does a little underlie the constant objection of the Devil's Advocate to Balzac, that almost every one of his good characters is more or less of a fool. Even a keen man of business *may,* of course, be easily outwitted in a game of pure speculation—a proposition which we need not go to France, or examine the long list of "crashes" from the fictitious *terrains de la Madeleine* to the real Panama, in order to establish. And a very keen man of business may be imprudently expensive in a combined fit of personal vanity and affection for his family. But it is a little of a stretch on the credulity of the reader to represent a plodding tradesman like Birotteau, who, as we are expressly told, had an old-fashioned horror of "paper," as not merely incurring large speculative obligations, but as stripping himself of every rap of ready money while exposing himself to an unusual demand for it. The picture of his going a-borrowing and a-sorrowing is drawn with great power and with much vivacity; but here, too, his simplicity is a thought exaggerated. And Constance's affection for, and fidelity to, an unattractive man, whom she saw to be little better than a fool, may be thought improbable in an ideal beauty with a clear head, while some may even say that ideal beauties are almost always extremely stupid. Yet, again, in Césarine, Momus may point to that superficiality and vagueness which usually, if not always, mar Balzac's treatment of an "honest" girl.

Yet these things will not, any more than those formerly mentioned, make any fair or genial judge give up the book to

a lower class than that of Balzac's best, if not of his very best. Whatever faults Birotteau may have, his goodness and his probity and, let us add (though it be a little illegitimate), his tragic end, make him one of the author's most sympathetic personages, as are also his wife and daughter. If Popinot is rather the virtuous apprentice of the stage, and Du Tillet the wicked ditto, who is *not* punished, the former is at least attractive; and Pillerault, the good uncle, certainly cannot be accused of foolishness. All the minor figures come in well for the action whenever Balzac will let them act, and not be talking himself; and even the bankruptcy affair acquires a sort of interest from the rapidity and bustle of its conduct. As for the ball—that famous and elaborate instance of the penalties and disappointments of elaborately engineered and anticipated pleasure—it is excellent. Nor should we close without special commendation for Claparon, a less labored personage than some of the author's, but a very happy sketch of rascality which is not exactly scoundrelism, because, though entirely unscrupulous, it is not in the least malign.

The book was originally published after a fashion not uncommon in France, but, I think, hardly, if at all, known in England, with no publisher's name, and not for sale, but as a bonus jointly given by the *Figaro* and the *Estafette* to their subscribers for 1838. It bore that date, but was actually issued in November 1837. In this form it had two volumes, three parts (the present two, and a third, *Le Triomphe de César*), and sixteen chapters with headings. Republished by Charpentier in 1839, it lost the chapter-, but kept the part-headings, the last being omitted when it became a *Scène de la Vie Parisienne* in the general arrangement of the *Comédie* (1844).

Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan is, or rather is part of, one of Balzac's most remarkable fictitious creations—the history of Diane de Maufrigneuse. This lady, who pervades at least a dozen of the stories, shorter and longer, is the subject of dispute between those who say that Balzac's *grandes dames* are rather creatures of the stage and of the inner consciousness than of life, and those who, as the saying is, take them for gospel. The latter do not seem to bring forward any argument except Balzac's greatness and a certain fascination about the personage. The former, besides dwelling on the obvious touches of exaggeration in the portrait, ask what opportunity Balzac had of really acquainting himself with the ways and manners of the Faubourg Saint-Germain? They admit the competence of the Duchesse de Castries, but point out that he did not know her very long; that he was to all appearance in the position, dangerous for a faithful portrait-painter, of having been taken up and dropped by her; and that she was, so far as is known, his only intimate or much-frequented acquaintance of the kind. It is not necessary to argue this question at length. The piece, however, has the special interest of having been at first dedicated to Theophile Gautier. It was written at Les Jardies in June 1839, and first appeared two months afterwards in the *Presse*, under the title of *La Princesse Parisienne*. This it kept when it appeared next year in volume form, published by Souverain, but forming part of a collection entitled *Le Foyer de l'Opéra*. In both these forms it was divided into eight chapters, with titles in the newspaper, without them in the book. In 1844, when it entered the *Comédie* as a *Scène de la Vie Parisienne*, it lost its old divisions and took its present title.

G. S.

THE RISE AND FALL OF CESAR BIROTTEAU

Retail Perfumer,
Deputy-Mayor of the Second Arrondissement, Paris, Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, etc.

To Monsieur Alphonse de Lamartine,
from his admirer,

De Balzac.

I.

CESAR'S APOGEE

THERE is but one brief interval of silence during a winter night in the Rue Saint-Honoré; for to the sounds of carriages rolling home from balls and theatres succeeds the rumbling of market gardeners' carts on their way to the Great Market. During this pause in the great symphony of uproar sent up by the streets of Paris, this cessation of traffic towards one o'clock in the morning, the wife of M. César Birotteau, of the retail perfumery establishment near the Place Vendôme, dreamed a frightful dream, and awoke with a start.

She had met her double. She had appeared to herself, clad in rags, laying a meagre, shriveled hand on her own shop-door handle. She had been at once in her chair at the cash desk and on the threshold; she had heard herself begging; she had heard two selves speaking in fact, the one from the desk, the other from the doorstep. She turned and stretched out her hand for her husband, and found his place cold. At that her terror grew to such a pitch that she could not move her head, her neck seemed stiffened to stone, the walls of her throat were glued together, her voice failed her; she sat up

rigid and motionless, staring before her with wide eyes. Her hair rose with a painful sensation, strange sounds rang in her ears, something clutched at her heart though it beat hard, she was covered with perspiration, and yet shuddering with cold in the alcove behind the two open folding doors.

Fear, with its partially morbific effects, is an emotion which puts so violent a strain upon the human mechanism, that the mental faculties are either suddenly stimulated by it to the highest degree of activity, or reduced to the last extremity of disorganization. Physiology has long been puzzled to account for a phenomenon which upsets its theories and stultifies its hypotheses, although it is simply and solely a shock brought about spontaneously, but, like all electrical phenomena, erratic and unaccountable in its manifestations. This explanation will become a commonplace when men of science will recognize the great part played by electricity in human thinking power.

Mme. Birotteau was just then enduring the pangs which bring about a certain mental lucidity consequent on those terrible discharges when the will is contracted or expanded by a mysterious mechanism. So that, during a lapse of time, exceedingly short if measured by the tickings of a clock, but incommensurable by reason of the infinite rapid impressions which it brought, the poor woman had the prodigious power of uttering more thoughts and of calling up more memories than would have arisen in her mind in its normal state in the course of a whole day. Her soliloquy during this vivid and painful experience may be resumed in a few words she uttered, incongruous and nonsensical as they were:—

"There is no reason whatever why Birotteau should be out of bed.—He ate so much veal; perhaps it disagreed with him. —But if he had been taken ill, he would have waked me up. —These nineteen years that we have slept here together under this roof, he has never got up in the middle of the night without telling me, poor dear!—He has never slept out except when he was on guard.—Did he go to bed when I did? Why, yes. Dear me! how stupid I am!"

She glanced over the bed. There lay her husband's night-cap, moulded to the almost conical shape of his head.

"Can he be dead?—Can he have made away with himself?—Why should he?" she thought. "Since they made him deputy-mayor two years ago, I haven't known what to make of him.—To get mixed up with public affairs, on the word of an honest woman, isn't it enough to make you feel sorry for a man?—The business is doing well.—He has just given me a shawl.—Perhaps it is doing badly!—Pshaw! I should know of it if it were.—But is there any knowing what is in the bottom of a man's mind? Or a woman's either? There is no harm in that.—Haven't sales amounted to five thousand francs this very day!—And then a deputy-mayor is not likely to kill himself; he knows the law too well for that.—But where can he be?"

She had no power to turn her head; she could not stretch out a hand to the bell-rope, which would have set in motion a general servant, three shopmen, and the errand boy. The nightmare that lasted on into her waking moments was so strong upon her that she forgot her daughter, peacefully sleeping in the next room, beyond the door which opened at the foot of the bed.

"Birotteau!" She received no answer. She fancied that she had called aloud, but, as a matter of fact, she had only spoken in her thoughts.

"Suppose he should have a mistress? But he has not wit enough for that," she thought, "and then he is too fond of me.—Didn't he tell Mme. Roguin that he had never been unfaithful to me, even in thought?—Why, the man is honesty itself!—If any one deserves to go to heaven, he does.—What he finds to say to his confessor, I don't know. He tells him make-believes.—For a Royalist as he is (without any reason to give for it, by the by), he does not make much of a puff of his religion.—Poor dear, he slips out to mass at eight o'clock as if he were running off to amuse himself on the sly. It is the fear of God that he has before his eyes; he does not trouble himself much about hell. How should he have a

mistress? He keeps so close to my apron-strings that I get tired of it. He loves me like the apple of his eye; he would put out his eyes for me.—All these nineteen years he has never spoken a harsh word to myself.—I come before his daughter with him.—Why, Césarine is there . . . (Césarine! Césarine!)—Birotteau never has a thought that he does not tell me.—It was a true word he said when he came to the sign of the *Little Sailor* and told me that it would take time to know him. And he's gone! . . . that is the extraordinary thing!"

She turned her head with an effort, and peered into the darkness. Night filled the room with picturesque effects, the despair of language, the exclusive province of the painter of genre. What words could reproduce the whimsical shapes that the curtains took as the draught swelled them, or the startling zigzag shadows that they cast? The dim night-light flickered over the red cotton folds; the brass rosette of the curtain-rest reflected the crimson gleams from a central boss, bloodshot like a robber's eyes; a ghostly gown was kneeling there; the room was filled, in fact, with all the strange, unfamiliar appearances which appall the imagination at a time when it can only see horrors and exaggerate them.

Mme. Birotteau fancied that she saw a bright light in the next room, and a thought of fire flashed across her; but she caught sight of a red bandana handkerchief, which looked to her like a pool of blood, and in another moment she discovered traces of a struggle in the arrangement of the furniture, and could think of nothing but burglars. She remembered that there was a sum of money in the safe, and a generous fear extinguished the cold ague of nightmare. Thoroughly alarmed, she sprang out on to the floor in her night-dress, to go to the assistance of the husband whom she fancied as engaged in a hand-to-hand conflict with assassins.

"Birotteau! Birotteau!" she cried in a voice of anguish.

The retail perfumer was standing in the middle of the adjacent room, apparently engaged in measuring the air with a yard stick. His dressing-gown (of green cotton,

with chocolate-colored spots) covered him so ill that his bare legs were red with the cold, but he did not seem to notice this.

When César turned round with a "Well, what is it, Constance?" he looked as a man absorbed by his schemes is apt to look—so ludicrously foolish, that Mme. Birotteau began to laugh.

"Dear me, César, how queer you look!" said she. "What made you leave me alone without saying anything? I nearly died of fright. I did not know what to think. What are you after, open to every wind that blows? You will catch your death of cold. Birotteau! do you hear?"

"Yes, wife; here I am," and the perfumer returned to the bedroom.

"There, come along and warm yourself, and tell me what crotchet you have in your head," returned Mme. Birotteau, raking among the ashes, which she hastily tried to rekindle. "I am frozen. How stupid it was of me to get up in my night-dress! But I really thought you were being murdered."

The merchant set down the bedroom candlestick on the chimney-piece, huddled himself in his dressing-gown, and looked about in an absent fashion for his wife's flannel petticoat.

"Here, pussie, just put this on," said he. "Twenty-two by eighteen——" he added, continuing his soliloquy. "We could have a magnificent drawing-room."

"Look here! Birotteau, you seem to be in a fair way to lose your wits. Are you dreaming?"

"No; I am thinking, wife."

"Then you might wait; your follies will keep till daylight at any rate," cried she, and, fastening her petticoat under her sleeping jacket, she went to open the door of their daughter's room.

"Césarine is fast asleep. She will not hear a word. Come, Birotteau, tell me about it. What is it?"

"We can give the ball."

"Give a ball! *We* give a ball! My dear! on the word of an honest woman, you are dreaming!"

"Dreaming? not a bit of it, darling.

"Listen; you should always do your duty according to your station in life. Now the Government has brought me into prominence, I belong to the Government, and it is incumbent upon us to study its spirit and to forward its aims by developing them. The Duc de Richelieu has just put an end to the occupation of the Allied troops. According to M. de la Billardière, official functionaries who represent the city of Paris ought to regard it as a duty—each in his own sphere of influence—to celebrate the liberation of French soil. Let us establish beyond proof a genuine patriotism which shall put those accursed schemers that call themselves Liberals to the blush, eh? Do you think that I do not love my country? I mean to show the Liberals and my enemies that to love the King is to love France!"

"Then do you think that you have enemies, my poor Birotteau?"

"Why, yes, we have enemies, wife. And half our friends in the quarter are among them. They all say, 'Birotteau has such luck; Birotteau was once a nobody, and look at him now! He is deputy-mayor; everything has prospered with him.' Very well; there is a nice disappointment still in store for them. You should be the first to hear that I am a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor; the King signed the patent yesterday!"

"Oh! well then, dear, we must give the ball," cried Mme. Birotteau, greatly excited. "But what can you have done so great as to have the Cross?"

Birotteau was embarrassed.

"When M. de la Billardière told me about it yesterday," said he, "I asked myself, just as you did, what claim I had to it. But, after thinking it over, I saw that I deserved it, and ended by approving the action of the Government. To begin with, I am a Royalist, and I was wounded at Saint-Roch in Vendémiaire; it is something, isn't it, to have borne arms for the good cause in those times? Then some of the merchants think that the way I discharged my duties as arbitrator at the Consular Tribunal had given general satisfac-

tion; and lastly, I am a deputy-mayor, and the King is distributing four Crosses among the municipal authorities in the city of Paris. After they had gone into the claims of the deputy-mayors for a decoration, the Prefect put me down at the top of the list. The King, too, is sure to know my name; thanks to old Ragon, I supply him with the only hair powder he will use; no one else has the recipe for the powder the late Queen used to wear, poor dear august victim! The Mayor backed me up with all his might. What was I to do? If the King gives me the Cross when I don't ask him for it, it looks to me as if I could not decline it without failing in respect. Was it my doing that I was made a deputy-mayor? So as we have the wind in our sails, wife, as your uncle Pillerault says when he is in a joking humor, I have made up my mind that we must live up to our high position. If I am to be somebody, I will have a try at being whatever Providence meant me to be; a sub-prefect, if such is my destiny. And you make a great mistake, wife, when you imagine that a citizen has discharged all the duty he owes his country when he has supplied his customers with scent across the counter for a score of years. If the State demands the co-operation of our intelligence, we are as much bound to give it, as to pay succession duty, or the door and window tax, *et cetera.* Do you want to sit at your desk all your life? You have been there a pretty long time (God be thanked). The ball will be a private fête of our own. No more of the shop; for *you,* that is. I shall burn the signboard *The Queen of Roses,* and the words CESAR BIROTTEAU (LATE RAGON), RETAIL PERFUMER, shall be painted out on the shop-front. I shall simply put up PERFUMERY in big gold letters instead. There will be room on the mezzanine floor for a cash desk and the safe, and a nice little room for you. I shall make the back-shop and the present dining-room and kitchen into a warehouse. Then I mean to take the first floor next door, and make a way into it through the wall. The staircase must be altered so that we can walk on the level out of one house and into the

other. We shall have a fine set of rooms then, furnished up to the nines.

"Yes. I will have your room done up, and contrive a boudoir for you, and Césarine shall have a pretty room. You must engage a young lady for the shop, and she and the assistant and your waiting-maid (yes, madame, you shall have a waiting-maid) shall have rooms on the second floor. The kitchen must be on the third floor. The cook and the errand-boy shall be lodged up there, and we will keep the stock of bottles, and flasks and china on the fourth. The workrooms can be in the attics, so when people come in they will not see bottles being filled and stoppered and labeled, nor sachets being made. That sort of thing is all very well for the Rue Saint-Denis, but it won't do in the Rue Saint-Honoré! Bad style. Our shop ought to be as snug as a drawing-room. Just tell me this: are we the only perfumers who have come in for honors? Aren't there vinegar makers and mustard manufacturers who have a command in the National Guard, and are well looked on at the Tuileries? Let us do as they do, and extend the business, at the same time making our way in society."

"One moment, Birotteau. Do you know what I think while I hear you talk? Well, to me, it is just as if a man was starting out on a wild-goose chase. Don't you remember what I told you when there was talk of your being made mayor? A quiet life before all things, I said; you are about as fit for public life as my arm for a windmill sail. Grand doings will be the ruin of you.

"You did not listen to me; and here the ruin has come upon us. If you are going to take part in politics, you must have money; and have we money? What! you mean to burn the signboard that cost six hundred francs, and give up the *Queen of Roses* and your real glory? Leave ambition to other people. If you put your hand in the fire, you get singed, don't you? Politics are very hot nowadays. We have a hundred thousand francs good money invested outside the business, the stock, and the factory, have we? If

you have a mind to increase it, do now as you did in 1793. The funds are at seventy-two, buy *rentes;* you would have ten thousand livres a year coming in without drawing anything out of the business. Then take advantage of the transfer to marry our Césarine, sell the business, and let us go and live in your part of the world. Why, any time for these fifteen years you have talked of buying the Treasury Farm, that nice little place near Chinon, with streams, and meadows, and woods, and vineyards, and crofts. It would bring you in a thousand crowns a year, and we both of us like the house. It is still to be had for sixty thousand crowns, and my gentleman must meddle and make in politics, must he?

"Just remember what we are—we are perfumers. Sixteen years ago, before you thought of the Superfine Pâte des Sultanes and the Carminative Toilet Lotion, if any one had come and said to you, 'You will have money enough to buy the Treasury Farm,' wouldn't you have been wild with joy? Very well; and now, when you can buy the property which you wanted so much that you talked of nothing else every time that you opened your mouth, you begin to talk of squandering the money that we have earned by the sweat of our brows, *ours* I may say, for all along I have sat there at the desk like a dog in a kennel. Now, instead of turning five halfpence into six farthings, and six farthings into nothing at all, wouldn't it be better to have a daughter married to a notary in Paris, and a house that you can stay at, and to spend eight months in the year at Chinon?

"Wait till the funds rise. You can give your daughter eight thousand livres a year; we will keep two thousand for ourselves, and the sale of the business will pay for the Treasury Farm. We will take the furniture down into the country, dear, it is quite worth while, and there we can live like princes, while here one must have at least a million to cut a figure."

"That is just what I expected," said César Birotteau.

"Oh! you think I am very foolish, no doubt, but I am not so foolish but that I have looked at the thing all round. Attend to what I am going to say. Alexandre Crottat is a son-in-law that would suit us to a T, and he will have Roguin's practice; but do you imagine that he would be satisfied with a hundred thousand francs? (always supposing that we pay down all our ready money when we marry our daughter; and I am of that way of thinking, for I would have nothing but dry bread for the rest of my days to see her as happy as a queen and the wife of a Paris notary, as you say.) Very well, but a hundred thousand francs down, or even eight thousand francs of *rentes*, would go no way towards buying Roguin's practice.

"Young Xandrot (as we call him) thinks, like everybody else, that we are a great deal richer than we are. If that father of his, a rich farmer who sticks to his property like a leech, does not sell something like a hundred thousand francs worth of land, Xandrot will not be a notary, for Roguin's practice is worth four or five hundred thousand francs. If Crottat does not pay half the money down, how will he manage the business? Césarine ought to have a portion of two hundred thousand francs, and we should retire like decent citizens of Paris on fifteen thousand livres a year in the funds; that is what I should like. If I could make you see all this as clear as daylight, you would have nothing left to say for yourself, eh?"

"Oh! if you have the wealth of the Indies——"

"So I have, darling. Yes," he put his arm round his wife's waist, and tapped her gently with his fingers, impelled by the joy that shone from every feature of his face. "I did not want to say a word about this to you till the thing was ripe, but, faith! to-morrow perhaps it will be settled. This it is.

"Roguin has been proposing a business speculation to me, so safe that he and one or two of his clients, and Ragon, and your uncle Pillerault, are going into it. We are to buy some building land near the Madeleine. Roguin thinks

that we can buy it now for a quarter of the price it will fetch in three years' time when the leases will be out, and we shall be free to exploit it. There are six of us; each agrees to take so much; I am finding three hundred thousand francs for the purchase of three-eighths. If any of us are short of money, Roguin will advance it, taking a mortgage on the share of the land as security. Pillerault, old Ragon, and I are going to take half of it among us; but I want to have it registered in my name, so as to keep hold of the handle of the pan and see how the fish are frying. Roguin himself, under the name of M. Charles Claparon, will be joint-owner with me; he will give a guarantee to each of his partners, and I shall do the same with mine. The deeds of purchase will be private deeds until we have all the lands in our hands. Roguin will look into it, and see which of the purchases must be completed, for he is not sure that we can dispense with intermediary registration, and yet transfer a separate title to the buyers when we break up the estate into separate lots; but it would take too long to explain it to you.

"When the building land has been paid for, we shall have nothing to do but fold our arms, and in three years' time we shall have a million. Césarine will be twenty years old, we shall have sold the business, and then, God willing, we will go modestly toward greatness."

"Well, but where are the three hundred thousand francs to come from?" asked Mme. Birotteau.

"My dear little woman, you know nothing of business. There are the hundred thousand francs in Roguin's hands; I will pay them down. Then I shall borrow forty thousand francs on the buildings and the land that our factory stands on, over in the Faubourg du Temple, and we have twenty thousand francs in bills and acceptances in the portfolio—altogether that makes a hundred and sixty thousand francs. There remain a hundred and forty-thousand francs to be raised; I will draw bills to the order of M. Charles Claparon the banker; he will advance the money, less the discount. And there are our three hundred thousand

francs; and you don't owe an account until it is due. When the bills fall due, we shall be ready for them, with the profits of the business. If we should find any difficulty in meeting them, Roguin would lend me the money at five per cent on a mortgage on my share of the building land. But there is no need to borrow. I have discovered a specific for making the hair grow, a Comagen oil. Livingston has put up a hydraulic press for me down yonder for the hazel-nuts; all the oil should be squeezed out at once under such strong pressure. In a year's time the probabilities are that I shall have made a hundred thousand francs at least. I am thinking about a placard with *Down with Wigs!* for a heading. It would make a prodigious sensation. *You* don't notice how I lie awake. These three months past Macassar Oil has not let me sleep. I mean to do for Macassar!"

"So these are the fine plans that have been running in your head for a couple of months, and not a word to me about them. And I have just seen myself begging at my own door; what a warning from Heaven! There will be nothing left to us after a while except our eyes to cry with over our troubles. Never shall you do it so long as I am alive; do you hear, César? There is some underhand work somewhere that you do not see; you are so straightforward and honest that you don't suspect others of cheating. What makes them come to offer you millions? You are giving bills; you are going beyond your means; and how if the Oil does not take? Suppose that the money does not come in, —suppose that you do not sell the building lots, how are you going to meet the bills? With the hazel-nut shells? You want to rise in the world; you don't intend to have your name over your own shop-door any longer; you mean to take down the sign—the *Queen of Roses*—and yet you are making up rigmaroles of prospectuses and placards, and César Birotteau's name will be posted up at every street-corner, and all over the hoardings, wherever there is building going on."

"Oh, no such thing! I shall open a branch business

under the name of Popinot. I shall take a shop somewhere near the Rue des Lombards, and put in young Anselme Popinot to look after it. I shall pay a debt of gratitude which we owe to M. and Mme. Ragon by starting their nephew in a business that may make his fortune. The poor Ragons have looked very seedy for some time past, I have thought."

"There! those people are after your money."

"Why, what people, my charmer? Your own uncle, who loves us like his own life, and comes to dine here every Sunday? Then there is that kind old Ragon, our predecessor, who plays boston with us; old Ragon, with a record of forty years of fair dealing. And lastly, do you mean Roguin, a notary of Paris, a man of fifty, who has been in practice for twenty-five years? A notary of Paris would be the best of the bunch if all honest folk were not equally good. My partners will help me out at a pinch. Where is the plot, darling?—Look here, I must give you a piece of my mind. On my word as an honest man, it weighs upon me.—You have always been as suspicious as a cat! As soon as we had two pennyworth of goods in the shop, you began to think that the customers were thieves.—A man has to go down on his knees to beg and pray of you to allow your fortune to be made. For a daughter of Paris, you have scarcely any ambition! If it were not for your eternal fears, there would not be a happier man than I am.—If I had listened to you, I should never have made the Pâte des Sultanes nor the Carminative Toilet Lotion. We have made a living out of the shop, but it was those two discoveries and our soaps that brought in the hundred and sixty thousand francs which we have over and above the business!—But for my genius, for I have talent as a perfumer, we should be petty shopkeepers, hard put to it to make both ends meet, and I should not be one of the notable merchants who elect the judges at the Tribunal of Commerce; I should neither have been a judge nor a deputy-mayor. Do you know what I should have been? A shopkeeper like old Ragon,—no

offence to him, for I respect shops; a shop has been the making of us. After selling perfumery for forty years, we should have had three thousand livres a year, as he has; and as prices go now, when things are twice as dear as they used to be, we too should have had hardly enough to live upon. (Day after day, it goes to my heart more and more to think of that old couple. I must come at the truth: I will have it out of Popinot to-morrow.)—Yes, if I had taken advice of you, of you that are afraid of your own luck, and are always asking if you will have to-morrow what you hold to-day, I should have no credit, nor the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and I should not be looked on as a man who knows what he is about. Oh, you may shake your head; if this succeeds, I may be deputy for Paris some day. Aha! I was not named César for nothing; everything has succeeded with me.—This is inconceivable! Everybody out of my own house admits that I have some capacity; but here at home, the one person that I want so much to please, and I toil and moil to make her happy, is just the very one who takes me for a fool."

There was such a depth of real and constant affection in these phrases, divided up by eloquent pauses and hurled forth like cannon balls (as is the wont of those who take up a recriminating attitude), that Mme. Birotteau in her secret heart felt touched, but, wife-like, she took advantage of the love she inspired to gain her own ends.

"Very well, Birotteau," said she, "if you love me, let me be happy in my own way. Neither you nor I have had any education; we do not know how to talk, nor how to flatter like worldly-wise people, and how can you expect that we should succeed in office under Government? I myself should be quite happy at the Treasury Farm. I have always been fond of animals and birds, and I could spend my time quite well in looking after the poultry, and living like a farmer's wife. Let us sell the business, marry our Césarine, and let your *Imogen* alone. We will pass the winters in Paris in our son-in-law's house, and we shall be happy; nothing in

politics nor in business could change our ways. Why should you try to eclipse other people? Is not our fortune enough for us? When you are a millionaire, will you be able to eat two dinners a day? Do you want another wife? Look at uncle Pillerault! He is wisely satisfied with what he has, and spends his life in doing good. What does HE want with fine furniture? For I know you have been ordering furniture; I saw Braschon in the shop, and he was not here to buy scent."

"Well, yes, darling, there is some furniture ordered for you. The workmen will begin to-morrow under an architect recommended by M. de la Billardière."

"Good Lord, have mercy upon us!"

"Why, you are unreasonable, pet. Do you think that, fresh and pretty as you are, you can go and bury yourself at thirty-seven at Chinon? I myself, thank the Lord, am only thirty-nine. Chance has opened up a fine career to me, and I am going to enter upon it. If I manage wisely, I can found a house famous among Paris citizens, as people used to do, build up a business, and the Birotteaus shall be like Roguin, Cochin, Guillaume, Le Bas, Nucingen, Saillard, Popinot, and Matifat, all of whom are making, or have made, their mark in their quarter. Come! come! if this speculation were not as safe as gold ingots——"

"Safe!"

"Yes, safe. I have been reckoning it out these two months. Without appearing to do so, I have been making inquiries as to building, at the Hôtel de Ville, and of architects and contractors. M. Grindot, the young architect who is to remodel our place, is in despair because he has no capital to invest in our speculation."

"He knows that there will be houses to build; he is urging you on so as to gobble you up."

"Can people like Pillerault, like Charles Claparon, and Roguin be taken in? The gain is as certain as the profits on the *Pâte*, you see."

"But why should Roguin want to speculate, dear, when

he nas bought his practice and made his fortune? I see him go by sometimes; he looks as thoughtful as a minister; he has an underhand look that I do not like; he has secret cares. In five years he has come to look like an old rake. Whose word have you for it that he will not take to his heels as soon as your money is in his hands? Such things have been known. Do we know much about him? It is true that we have been acquainted for fifteen years, but he is not one that I would put my hand into the fire for. I have it! he has ozæna; he does not live with his wife; he has mistresses no doubt, and they are ruining him; there is no other reason for his low spirits that I see. As I dress in the morning, I look through the blinds, and I see him going home on foot. Where does he come from? Nobody knows. It looks to me as if he had another establishment somewhere in town, and he spends one way, and madame another.

"Is that a life for a notary? If they make fifty thousand francs and get through sixty thousand, there will be an end of the money; in twenty years time they would be as bare as shorn lambs; but if a man is used to shine, he will plunder his friends without mercy. Charity should properly begin at home. The little rascal du Tillet, who used to be with us, is one of his cronies, and I see nothing good in that friendship. If he could not find out du Tillet, he is very blind; and if he knows him, why does he make so much of him? You will say that there is something between Roguin's wife and du Tillet. Very well; I look for no good from a man who has no sense of honor where his wife is concerned. And in any case, aren't the owners of the building lots very stupid to sell the worth of a hundred francs for a hundred sous? If you were to meet a child who did not know what a louis was worth, would you not tell him? Your stroke of business looks to me myself very much like a robbery, no offence to you."

"Dear me! what queer things women are sometimes, and how they mix up their ideas! If Roguin had never meddled in the matter, you would have said, 'Stay, César, stop

a bit; you are acting without consulting Roguin, it will come to no good.' In this present instance he is pledged as it were, and you tell me——"

"No; it is a M. Claparon."

"But a notary's name cannot appear in a speculation."

"Then why should he do something against the law? What do you say to *that,* you who are such a stickler for the law?"

"Just let me go on. Roguin is going into it himself, and you tell me that it will come to no good. Is that sensible? Again you say, 'He is doing something against the law.' But his name will appear in it if necessary. And now you tell me that 'he is rich.' Might not people say as much of me? Ragon and Pillerault might just as well say of me, 'Why are you going into this when you are wallowing in riches?' "

"A tradesman is one thing and a notary another," objected Mme. Birotteau.

"In short, my conscience is quite clear," César went on. "People who sell, sell because they cannot help it; we are no more robbing them than we rob fund-holders when we buy at seventy-five. To-day you buy building lots at to-day's prices; in two years time it will be different, just as it is with *rentes.* You may be quite sure, Constance-Barbe-Joséphine Pillerault, that you will never catch César Birotteau doing anything that is against the law, nor against his conscience, nor unscrupulous, or not strictly just and fair. That a man who has been in business eighteen years should be suspected in his own family of cheating!"

"Come, César, be pacified! A wife who has known you all that time knows the depths of your soul. You are the master after all. You made the money, didn't you? It is yours; you can spend it. We might be brought to the lowest depths of poverty, but neither your daughter nor I would ever say a single word of reproach. But listen. When you invented the Pâte des Sultanes and the Carminative Toilet Lotion, what risk did you run? Five or six thousand

francs perhaps. To-day you are risking all you have on a single stake, and you are not the only player in this game, and some of the others may turn out sharper than you are.

"You could give this ball and have the rooms redecorated, and spend a thousand francs over it—a useless expense, but not ruinous—but as to the Madeleine affair, I am against it, once and for all. You are a perfumer; be a perfumer, and not a speculator in building land. We women have an instinct that does not lead us astray. I have warned you; now act on your own ideas. You have been a judge at the Tribunal of Commerce, you know the law, you have steered your boat wisely, and I will follow you, César! But I shall have misgivings until I see our fortune on a sound basis and Césarine well married. God send that my dream was not prophetic!"

This meekness was annoying to Birotteau. He had recourse to a simple stratagem, which he found useful on such occasions.

"Listen, Constance; I have not really given my word, though it is as good as if I had."

"Oh! César, there is nothing more to be said, so let us say no more about it. Honor before riches. Come, get into bed, dear; there is no firewood left. Besides, it is easier to talk in bed if it amuses you.—Oh! the bad dream I had! Good Lord, to see *yourself!* Why, it was fearful! . . . Césarine and I will make a pretty number of *neuvaines* for the success of the land."

"Of course, the help of God would do us no harm," Birotteau said gravely, "but the essence of hazel-nuts is a power likewise, wife. I discovered this, like the Pâte des Sultanes, by accident; the first time it was by opening a book, but it was an engraving of *Hero and Leander* that suggested this new idea to me. A woman, you know, pouring oil on her lover's head; isn't it nice? The most certain speculations are those that are based on vanity, self-love, or a regard for appearances. Those sentiments will never be extinct."

"Alas, I see that clearly."

"At a certain age," pursued Birotteau, "men will do anything to grow hair on their heads when they have none. Hairdressers have told me for some time past that they are selling hair-dyes and all sorts of drugs that are said to promote the growth of the hair as well as Macassar Oil. Since the peace, men live more among women, and women do not like bald heads, eh! eh! *mimi!* So the demand for that class of article can be explained by the political situation.

"A composition which would keep your hair in good condition would sell like bread, and all the more so because the essence will doubtless be approved by the Académie des Sciences. Perhaps kind M. Vauquelin will do me another good turn. I shall go to submit my notion to him to-morrow, and ask him to accept that engraving which I have found at last after inquiring for it for two years in Germany. M. Vauquelin is engaged in analyzing hair, precisely the subject, so Chiffreville (who is associated with him in the production of chemicals) tells me. If my discovery concurs with his, my essence will be bought by both sexes. There is a fortune in my idea, I repeat. Good Heavens! I cannot sleep for it. Eh! luckily, little Popinot has the finest head of hair in the world. With a young lady in the shop whose hair should reach to the ground, and who should say (if the thing is possible without sinning against God or your neighbor) that the Comagen Oil (for it is decidedly an oil) counts for something in bringing that about; all the grizzled heads will be down upon it like poverty upon the world. And I say, dearie, how about your ball? I am not spiteful, but I really should like to have that little rogue of a du Tillet, who swaggers about and never sees me on 'Change. He knows that I know something that is not pretty about him. Perhaps I let him off too easily. How funny it is, wife, that one should always be punished for good actions; here below, of course! I have been like a father to him; you do not know all that I have done for him."

"Simply to hear you talk of him makes my flesh creep.

If you had known what he intended to do to you, you would not have kept the theft of three thousand francs so quiet (for I have guessed how the thing was arranged). If you had put him in the police court, perhaps you might have done a good many people a service."

"What did he mean to do to me?"

"Nothing. Birotteau, if you were inclined to listen to me to-night, I would give you a bit of sound advice, and that is to let du Tillet alone."

"Would not people think it very strange if I were to forbid an old assistant my house after I had been his surety for twenty thousand francs when he first started in business for himself. There, let us do good for its own sake. And perhaps du Tillet has mended his ways."

"Everything must be put topsy-turvy here!"

"What is this about topsy-turvy? Why, it will all be ruled like a sheet of music. So you have forgotten already what I have just told you about the staircase, and how I have arranged with Cayron, the umbrella merchant next door, to take part of his house! He and I must go together in the morning to see his landlord, M. Molineux. I have as much business on hand to-morrow as a Minister."

"You have made me dizzy with your plans," said Constance; "I am muddled with them; and besides, Birotteau, I am sleepy."

"Good-morning," returned her husband. "Just listen—I say good-morning, because it is morning now, *mimi!* Ah, she has dropped off to sleep, dear child! There! you shall be the richest of the rich, or my name will not be César any longer," and a few minutes later Constance and César were peacefully snoring.

A rapid glance over the previous history of this household will confirm the impression which should have been conveyed by the friendly dispute between the two principal personages in this *Scène*, in which the lives of a retail shopkeeper and his wife are depicted. This sketch will explain,

moreover, the strange chances by which César Birotteau became a perfumer, a deputy-mayor, an ex-officer of the National Guard, and a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor. By laying bare the depths of his character and the springs of his greatness, it will be possible to comprehend how it is that the vicissitudes of commerce, which strong heads turn to their advantage, become irreparable catastrophes for weaker spirits. Events are never absolute; their consequences depend entirely upon the individual. The misfortune which is a stepping-stone for genius, becomes a piscina for the Christian, a treasure for a quick-witted man, and for weaklings an abyss.

A cotter, Jacques Birotteau by name, living near Chinon, took unto himself a wife, a domestic servant in the house of a lady, who employed him in her vineyard. Three sons were born to them; his wife died at the birth of the third, and the poor fellow did not long survive her. Then the mistress, out of affection for her maid, adopted the oldest of the cotter's boys; she brought him up with her own son, and placed him in a seminary. This François Birotteau took orders, and during the Revolution led the wandering life of priests who would not take the oath, hiding from those who hunted them down like wild beasts, lucky to meet with no worse fate than the guillotine. At the time when this story begins he was a priest of the cathedral at Tours, and had but once left that city to see his brother César. On that occasion the traffic in the streets of Paris so bewildered the good man that he dared not leave his room; he called the cabs "half-coaches," and was astonished at everything. He stayed one week, and then went back to Tours, promising himself that he would never revisit the capital.

The vinedresser's second son, Jean Birotteau, was drawn by the army, and during the early wars of the Revolution promptly became a captain. At the battle of the Trebbia, Macdonald called for volunteers to storm a battery, and Captain Jean Birotteau charged with his company and fell.

It appeared to be the destiny of the Birotteaus that other men should supplant them, or that events should be too strong for them wherever they might be.

The youngest son is the chief actor in this *Scène*. When César was fourteen years old, and could read, write, and cipher, he left the district, and with one louis in his pocket set out on foot for Paris to make his fortune. On the recommendation of an apothecary in Tours, M. and Mme. Ragon, retail perfumers, took him as errand boy. César at that time was possessed of a pair of hobnailed shoes, a pair of breeches, blue stockings, a sprigged waistcoat, a countryman's jacket, three ample shirts of good linen, and a stout walking-stick. His hair might be clipped like a chorister's, but he was a solidly-built Tourangeau; and any tendency to the laziness rampant in his district was counteracted in him by a strong desire to make his way in the world. Perhaps he was lacking somewhat in brains as in education, but he had inherited upright instincts and scrupulous integrity from his mother, who had "a heart of gold," as they say in Touraine.

César was paid six francs a month by way of wages. He boarded in the house, and slept on a truckle-bed in the attics next to the servant's room. The shopmen showed him how to fetch and carry and tie up parcels, to sweep out the shop and the pavement before it, and made a butt of him, breaking him in to business after the manner of their kind, and contriving to blend a good deal of amusement (for themselves) with his instruction. M. and Mme. Ragon spoke to him as if he were a dog. Nobody cared how tired the apprentice might be, and he was often very tired and footsore of a night after tramping over the pavements, and his shoulders often ached. The principle "each for himself," that gospel of great cities, put in application, made César's life in Paris a very hard one. He used to cry sometimes when the day was over, and he thought of Touraine, where the peasant works leisurely, and the mason takes his time about laying a stone, and toil is judiciously tempered by

idleness; but he usually fell asleep before he reached the point of thinking of running away, for his morning's round of work awaited him, and he did his duty with the instinctive obedience of a yard dog. If he happened to complain, the first shopman would smile jocosely. "Ah, my boy," said he, "life is not all roses at the *Queen of Roses,* and larks don't drop ready roasted into your mouth; first catch your lark, and then you want the other things before you cook it."

The cook, a stout Picarde, kept the best morsels for herself, and never spoke to César but to complain of M. and Mme. Ragon, who left her nothing to purloin. On one Sunday at the end of every month she was obliged to stop in the house, and then she broke ground with César. Ursule, scoured for Sunday, was a charming creature in the eyes of the poor errand boy, who, but for a chance, was about to make shipwreck on the first sunken reef in his career. Like all human beings who have no one to care for them, he fell in love with the first woman who gave him a kind glance. The cook took César under her wing, and secret love passages followed, at which the assistants jeered unmercifully. Luckily, two years later, the cook threw over César for a young runaway from the army, a fellow-countryman of hers who was hiding in Paris; and the Picard, a land-owner to the extent of several acres, allowed himself to be drawn into a marriage with Ursule.

But during those two years the cook fed her lad César well, and explained to him the seamy side of not a few of the mysteries of Paris. Motives of jealousy led her to instil into him a perfect horror of low haunts, whose perils seemingly were not unknown to her. In 1792 César, the basely deserted, had grown accustomed to his life; his feet were used to the pavements, his shoulders accommodated to packing-cases, his wits to what he called the *humbug* of Paris. So, when Ursule threw him over, he promptly took comfort, for she had not realized any of his intuitive ideas as to sentiments. Lascivious, bad-tempered, fawning, and rapacious, a selfish woman, given to drink, she had jarred on Birot-

teau's unsophisticated nature, and had opened out no fair future to him. At times the poor boy saw with dismay that he was bound by the strongest of ties for a simple heart to a creature with whom he had no sympathy. By the time that he was set free he had developed, and had reached the age of sixteen. His wits had been sharpened by Ursule and by the shopmen's jokes; he set himself to learn the business. Intelligence was hidden beneath his simplicity. He watched the customers with shrewd eyes. In his spare moments he asked for explanations concerning the goods; he remembered where everything was kept; one fine day he knew the goods, prices, and quantities in stock better than the newer comers, and thenceforward M. and Mme. Ragon looked on him as a settled institution.

When the Requisition of the terrible year II. made a clean sweep of Citizen Ragon's house, César Birotteau, promoted to be second assistant, improved his position, received a salary of fifty livres per month, and seated himself at the Ragons' table with joy unspeakable. The second assistant at the sign of the *Queen of Roses* had by this time saved six hundred francs, and he now had a room filled with furniture such as he had for a long time coveted, in which he could keep the belongings which he had accumulated under lock and key. On Décadis, dressed after the fashion of an epoch which affected rough and homely ways, the quiet, humble peasant lad looked at least the equal of other young citizens, and in this way he overleapt the social barriers which in domestic life would, in different times, have been raised between the peasant and the trading classes. Towards the end of that year his honesty won for him the control of the till. The awe-inspiring Citoyenne Ragon saw to his linen, and husband and wife treated him like one of the family.

In Vendémiaire 1794 César Birotteau, being possessed of one hundred gold louis, exchanged them for six thousand francs in assignats, bought *rentes* therewith at thirty francs, paid for them when depreciated prices ruled on the Ex-

change, and hoarded his stock-receipt with unspeakable delight. From that day forward he followed the rise and fall of the funds and the course of events with a secret anxiety that made his heart beat fast at the tidings of every victory or defeat which marked the history of that period.

At this critical period M. Ragon, sometime purveyor of perfumes to Her Majesty Queen Marie-Antoinette, confided to César Birotteau his attachment to the fallen tyrants. This confidence was an event of capital importance in César's life. The Tourangeau was transformed into a fanatical adherent of Royalty in the course of evening conversations after the shutters were put up, the books posted, and the streets quiet without. César was simply obeying his natural instincts. His imagination kindled at the tale of the virtuous deeds of Louis XVI., followed by anecdotes told by husband and wife of the good qualities of the Queen whom they extolled. His tender heart was revolted by the horrible fate of the two crowned heads, struck off but a few paces from the shop door, and he conceived a hatred for a system of government which poured forth innocent blood that cost nothing to shed.

Commercial instincts made him quick to see the death of trade in the law of maximum prices, and in political storms, which always bode ill to business. In his quality of perfumer, moreover, he loathed a Revolution that forbade powder, and was responsible for the fashion of wearing the hair *à la Titus*. The tranquillity secured to the nation by an absolute monarchy seemed to be the one possible condition in which life and property would be safe, so he waxed zealous for a monarchy.

M. Ragon, finding so apt a disciple, made him his assistant in the shop, and initiated him into the secrets of the *Queen of Roses*. Some of the customers were the most active and devoted of the secret agents of the Bourbons, and kept up a correspondence between Paris and the West. Carried away by youthful enthusiasm, electrified by contact with such men as Georges, La Billardière, Montauran, Bau-

van, Longuy, Manda, Bernier, du Guénic, and Fontaine, César flung himself into the conspiracy of the 13th Vendémiaire, when Royalists and Terrorists combined against the dying Convention.

César had the honor of warring against Napoleon on the steps of the Church of Saint-Roch, and was wounded at the beginning of the action. Every one knows the result of this attempt. The obscurity from which Barras' aide-de-camp then emerged was Birotteau's salvation. A few friends carried the bellicose counter-hand home to the *Queen of Roses*, where he lay in hiding in the garret, nursed by Mme. Ragon, and lucky to be forgotten. César's military courage had been nothing but a flash. During his month of convalescence he came to some sound conclusions as to the ludicrous alliance of politics and perfumery. If a Royalist he remained, he made up his mind that he would be simply and solely a Royalist perfumer, that he would never compromise himself again, and he threw himself body and soul into his calling.

After the 18th Brumaire, M. and Mme. Ragon, despairing of the Royalist cause, determined to retire from the perfumery trade, to live like respectable private citizens, and to cease to meddle in politics. If they were to receive the full value of their business, it behoved them to find a man who had more honesty than ambition, and more homely sense than brilliancy, so Ragon broached the matter to his first assistant. Birotteau hesitated. He was twenty years old, with a thousand francs a year invested in the public funds; it was his ambition to go to live near Chinon as soon as he should have fifteen hundred francs a year, and the First Consul, after consolidating his position at the Tuileries, should have consolidated the national debt. He asked himself why he should risk his little honestly-earned independence in business. He had never expected to make so much wealth; it was entirely owing to chances which are only embraced in youth; and now he was thinking of taking a wife in Touraine, a woman who should have an equal fortune, so that he might buy and cul-

tivate a little property called the Treasury Farm, a bit of land on which he had set longing eyes since he had come to man's estate. He dreamed of adding more land to the Treasury Farm, of making a thousand crowns a year, of leading a happy and obscure life there. He was on the point of refusing the perfumer's offer, when love suddenly altered his resolutions and multiplied the total of his ambitions by ten.

Since Ursule's base desertion, César had led a steady life; this was partly a consequence of hard work, partly a dread of the risks run in pursuit of pleasure in Paris. Desire that remains unsatisfied becomes a craving, and marriage for the lower middle classes becomes a fixed idea, for it is the one way open to them of winning and appropriating a woman. César Birotteau was in this case. The first assistant was the responsible person at the *Queen of Roses;* he had not a moment to spare for amusement. In such a life the craving is still more imperatively felt; so it happened that the apparition of a handsome girl, to whom a dissipated young fellow would scarcely have given a thought, was bound to make the greatest impression upon the steady César.

One fine June day, as he was about to cross the Pont Marie to the Ile Saint-Louis, he saw a girl standing in the doorway of a corner shop on the Quai d'Anjou. Constance Pillerault was a forewoman in a linen-drapery establishment, at the sign of the *Little Sailor,* a pioneer instance of a kind of shop which has since spread all over Paris, with painted signboards more or less in evidence, flying flags, much display. Shawls are suspended in the windows, and piles of cravats erected like card castles, together with countless devices to attract custom, ribbon streamers, showcards, notices of fixed prices: optical illusions and effects carried to the pitch of perfection which has made of shop windows the fairyland of commerce.

The low prices asked at the sign of the *Little Sailor* for the goods described as "novelties" had brought this shop, in one of the quietest and least fashionable quarters of Paris, an unheard-of influx of custom.

The aforesaid young lady behind the counter was as cele-

brated for her beauty as La belle Limonadière of the Café des Milles Colonnes at a later day, and not a few others whose unfortunate lot it has been to attract faces young and old, more numerous than the paving stones of Paris, to the windows of milliners' shops and cafés. The first assistant from the *Queen of Roses,* whose life was spent between Saint-Roch and the Rue de la Sourdière, in the daily routine of the perfumery business, did not so much as suspect the existence of the *Little Sailor,* for retailers in Paris know very little of each other.

César was so violently smitten with the beautiful Constance that he hurried tempestuously into the *Little Sailor* to bargain for half-a-dozen linen shirts. Long did he haggle over the price, bale after bale of linen was displayed for his inspection; he behaved exactly like an Englishwoman in a humor for shopping. The young lady condescended to interest herself in César's purchase; perceiving, by certain signs which women understand, that he had come to the shop more for the sake of the saleswoman than for her goods. He gave his name and address to the young lady, who became quite indifferent to the customer's admiration as soon as he had made his purchase. The poor assistant had done but little to gain Ursule's good graces; if he had been sheepish then, love now made him more sheepish still; he did not dare to say a syllable, and was, moreover, too much dazzled to note the indifference which succeeded to the smiles of this siren of commerce.

Every evening for a week he took up his post before the *Little Sailor,* hanging about for a glance as a dog waits for a bone at a kitchen door; regardless of the jibes in which the shopmen and saleswomen indulged at his expense; making way meekly for customers or passers-by, watchful of every little change that took place in the shop. A few days later, he again entered the paradise where his angel dwelt, not so much to purchase pocket-handkerchiefs of her as with a view of communicating a luminous idea to the angel's mind.

"If you should require any perfumery, mademoiselle," he

remarked, as he paid the bill, "I could supply you in the same way."

Constance Pillerault daily received brilliant proposals, in which there was never any mention of marriage; and though her heart was as pure as her white forehead, it was not until the indefatigable César had proved his love by six months of strategical operations, that she deigned to receive his attentions. Even then she would not commit herself. Prudence had been demanded of her by the multitudinous number of her admirers—wholesale wine merchants, well-to-do bar-keepers, and others, who made eyes at her. The lover found a supporter in her guardian, M. Claude-Joseph Pillerault, an ironmonger on the Quai de la Ferraille, a discovery made by the secret espionage which is pre-eminently a lover's shift.

In this rapid sketch, it is impossible to describe the delights of this harmless Parisian love-intrigue; the little extravagances characteristic of the shopman—the first melons of the season, the little dinners at Vénua's, followed by the theatre, the drives into the country in a cab on Sunday—must be passed over in silence. César was not a positively handsome young fellow, but there was nothing in his appearance to repel love. Life in Paris and days spent in a dark shop had toned down the high color natural to the peasant lad. His thick black hair, his Norman breadth of shoulder, his sturdy limbs, his simple straightforward look, all contributed to prepossess people in his favor. Uncle Pillerault, the responsible guardian of his brother's child, made various inquiries about the Tourangeau, and gave his consent; and in the fair month of May 1800, Mlle. Pillerault promised to marry César Birotteau. He nearly fainted with joy when Constance-Barbe-Joséphine accepted him as her husband under a lime-tree at Sceaux.

"You will have a good husband, my little girl," said M. Pillerault. "He has a warm heart and sentiments of honor. He is as straight as a line, and as good as the Child Jesus; he is a king of men, in short."

Constance put away once and for all the dreams of a brill-

iant future, which, like most shop girls, she had sometimes indulged. She meant to be a faithful wife and a good mother, and took up this life in accordance with the religious programme of the middle classes. After all, this part suited her ideas much better than the dangerous vanities tempting to a youthful Parisian imagination. Constance's intelligence was a narrow one; she was the typical small tradesman's wife, who always grumbles a little over her work, who refuses a thing at the outset, and is vexed when she is taken at her word; whose restless activity takes all things, from cash-box to kitchen, as its province, and supervises everything, from the weightiest business transactions down to almost invisible darns in the household linen. Such a woman scolds while she loves, and can only conceive ideas of the very simplest; only the small change, as it were, of thought passes current with her; she argues about everything, lives in chronic fear of the unknown, makes constant forecasts, and is always thinking of the future. Her statuesque yet girlish beauty, her engaging looks, her freshness, prevented César from thinking of her shortcomings; and, moreover, she made up for them by a woman's sensitive conscientiousness, an excessive thrift, by her fanatical love of work, and genius as a saleswoman.

Constance was just eighteen years old, and the possessor of eleven thousand francs. César, in whom love had developed the most unbounded ambition, bought the perfumery business, and transplanted the *Queen of Roses* to a handsome shop near the Place Vendôme. He was only twenty-one years of age, married to a beautiful and adored wife, and almost the owner of his establishment, for he had paid three-fourths of the amount. He saw (how should he have seen otherwise?) the future in fair colors, which seemed fairer still as he measured his career from its starting-point.

Roguin (Ragon's notary) drew up the marriage-contract, and gave sage counsels to the young perfumer; he it was who interfered when the latter was about to complete the purchase

of the business with his wife's money. "Just keep the money by you, my boy; ready money is sometimes a handy thing in a business," he had said.

Birotteau gazed at the notary in admiration, fell into the habit of consulting him, and made a friend of Roguin. Like Ragon and Pillerault, he had so much faith in notaries as a class, that he placed himself in Roguin's hands without admitting a doubt of him. Thanks to this advice, César started business with the eleven thousand francs brought him by Constance; and would not have "changed places" with the First Consul, however brilliant Napoleon's lot might seem to be.

At first the Birotteau establishment had but one servant-maid. They lodged on the mezzanine floor above the shop. In this sort of den, passably furnished by an upholsterer, the newly-wedded pair entered upon a perennial honeymoon. Mme. César at her cash desk was a marvel to see. Her famous beauty exercised an enormous influence on the sales; the dandies of the Empire talked of nothing but the lovely Mme. Birotteau. If César's political principles were tainted with Royalism, it was acknowledged that his business principles were above suspicion; and if some of his fellow-tradesmen envied him his luck, he was believed to deserve it. That shot on the steps of the Church of Saint-Roch had gained him a certain reputation—he was looked upon as a brave man, and a man deep in political secrets; though he had nothing of a soldier's courage in his composition, and not even a rudimentary political notion in his head.

On these data the good folk of the Arrondissement made him a Captain of the National Guard, but he was cashiered by Napoleon (according to Birotteau, that matter of Vendémiaire still rankled in the First Consul's mind), and thenceforward César was invested with a certain halo of martyrdom, cheaply acquired, which made him interesting to opponents, and gave him a certain importance.

Here, in brief, is the history of this household, so happy in itself, and disturbed by none but business cares.

During the first year, César instructed his wife in all the ins and outs of the perfumery business, which she was admirably quick to grasp; she might have been brought into the world for that sole purpose, so well did she adapt herself to her customers. The result of the stocktaking at the end of the year alarmed the ambitious perfumer. After deducting all expenses, he might perhaps hope, in twenty years' time, to make the modest sum of a hundred thousand francs, the price of his felicity. He determined then and there to find some speedier road to fortune, and, by way of a beginning, to be a manufacturer as well as a retailer.

Acting against his wife's counsel, he took the lease of a shed on some building land in the Faubourg du Temple, and painted up thereon, in huge letters, CÉSAR BIROTTEAU'S FACTORY. He enticed a workman from Grasse, and with him began to manufacture several kinds of soap, essences, and eau-de-cologne, on the system of half profits. The partnership only lasted six months, and ended in a loss, which he had to sustain alone; but Birotteau did not lose heart. He meant to obtain a result at any price, if it were only to escape a scolding from his wife; and, indeed, he confessed to her afterwards that, in those days of despair, his head used to boil like a pot on the fire, and that many a time, but for religious principles, he would have thrown himself into the Seine.

One day, depressed by several unsuccessful experiments, he was sauntering home to dinner along the boulevards (the lounger in Paris is a man in despair quite as often as a genuine idler), when a book among a hamperful at six sous apiece caught his attention; his eyes were attracted by the yellow dusty title-page, *Abdeker,* so it ran, *or the Art of Preserving Beauty.*

Birotteau took up the work. It claimed to be a translation from the Arabic, but in reality it was a sort of romance written by a physician in the previous century. César happened to stumble upon a passage therein which treated of perfumes, and with his back against a tree in the boulevard, he turned the pages over till he reached a footnote, wherein

With his back against a tree in the Boulevard, he turned the pages over

During the first year, César instructed his wife [illegible] ins and outs of the perfumery business, which [illegible] rably quick to grasp; she might have been broug[illegible] world for that sole purpose, so well did she adapt [illegible] her customers. The result of the stocktaking at [illegible]

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Preserving Beauty.

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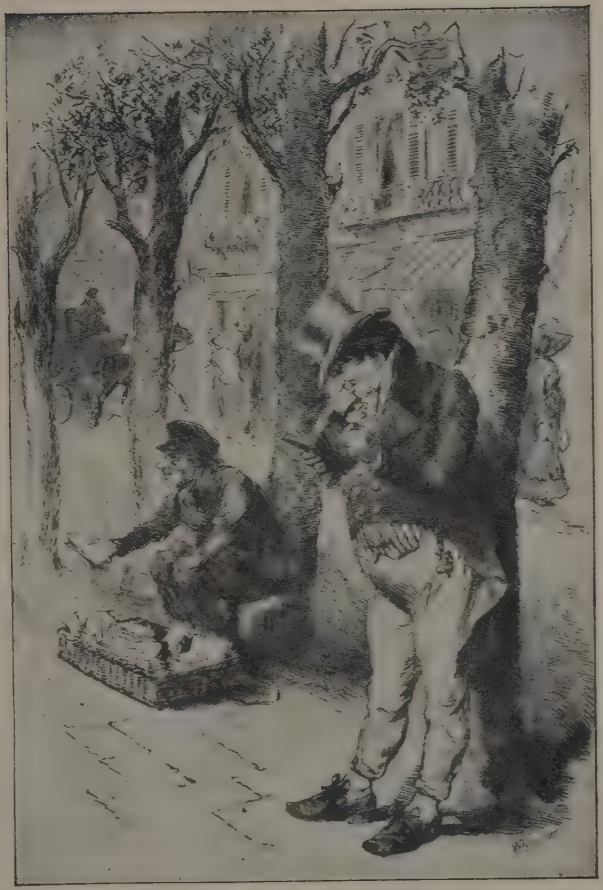


With his back against a tree in the Boulevard, he turned the pages over

the learned author discoursed of the nature of the dermis and epidermis. The writer showed conclusively that such and such an unguent or soap often produced an effect exactly opposite to that intended, and the ointment, or the soap, acted as a tonic upon a skin that required a lenitive treatment, or *vice versâ*.

Birotteau saw a fortune in the book, and bought it. Yet, feeling little confidence in his unaided lights, he went to Vauquelin, the celebrated chemist, and in all simplicity asked him how to compose a double cosmetic which should produce the required effect upon the human epidermis in either case. The really learned—men so truly great in this sense that they can never receive in their lifetime all the fame that should reward vast labors like theirs—are almost always helpful and kindly to the poor in intellect. So it was with Vauquelin. He came to the assistance of the perfumer, gave him a formula for a paste to whiten the hands, and allowed him to style himself its inventor. It was this cosmetic that Birotteau called the Superfine Pâte des Sultanes. The more thoroughly to accomplish his purpose, he used the recipe for the paste for a wash for the complexion, which he called the Carminative Toilet Lotion.

He took a hint from the *Little Sailor*, and was the first among perfumers to make the lavish use of placards, handbills, and divers kinds of advertisement, which, perhaps not undeservedly, are called quackery. The Pâte des Sultanes and the Carminative Toilet Lotion were introduced to the polite world and to commerce by gorgeous placards, with the words *Approved by the Institute* at the head. The effect of this formula, employed thus for the first time, was magical. Not France only, but the face of Europe was covered with flaming proclamations, yellow, scarlet, and blue, which informed the world that the sovereign lord of the *Queen of Roses* manufactured, kept in stock, and supplied everything in his line of business at moderate charges.

At a time when the East was the one topic of conversation, in a country where every man has a natural turn for the part

of a sultan, and every woman is no less minded to become a sultana, the idea of giving to any cosmetic such a name as the Pâte des Sultanes might have occurred to any ordinary man, it needed no cleverness to foresee its fascination; but the public always judges by results, and Birotteau's reputation for business ability but grew the more when he indited a prospectus, and the very absurdity of its language contributed to its success. In France we only laugh at men and things who are talked about, and those who fail to make any mark are not talked about. So although Birotteau's stupidity was real and not feigned, people gave him credit for playing the fool on purpose.

A copy of the prospectus has been procured, not without difficulty, by the house of Popinot & Co., druggists in the Rue des Lombards. In a more elevated connection this curious piece of rhetoric would be styled an historical document, and valued for the light that it sheds on contemporary manners. Here, therefore, it is given:—

CÉSAR BIROTTEAU'S

SUPERFINE PÂTE DES SULTANES

AND

CARMINATIVE TOILET LOTION.

A MARVELOUS DISCOVERY!

Approved by the Institute.

"For some time past a preparation for the hands, and a toilet lotion more efficacious than Eau-de-Cologne, have been generally desired by both sexes throughout Europe. After devoting long nights to the study of the dermis and epidermis of both sexes—for both attach, and with reason, the greatest importance to the softness, suppleness, bloom, and delicate surface of the skin—M. Birotteau, a perfumer of high standing, and well known in the capital and abroad, has invented two preparations, which from their first appearance have been deservedly called 'marvelous' by people of

the highest fashion in Paris. Both preparations possess astonishing properties, and act upon the skin without bringing about premature wrinkles, the inevitable result of the rash use of the drugs hitherto compounded by ignorance and cupidity.

"These inventions are based upon the difference of temperaments, which are divided into two great classes, are indicated by the difference of color in the pâte and the lotion; the rose-colored preparations being intended for the dermis and epidermis of persons of lymphatic constitution, and the white for those endowed with a sanguine temperament.

"The pâte is called the 'Pâte des Sultanes,' because the specific was in the first instance invented for the Seraglio by an Arab physician. It has been approved by the Institute on the report of our illustrious chemist Vauquelin, and the lotion, likewise approved, is compounded upon the same principles.

"The Pâte des Sultanes, an invaluable preparation, which exhales the sweetest fragrance, dissipates the most obstinate freckles, whitens the skin in the most stubborn cases, and represses the perspiration of the hand from which women suffer no less than men.

"The 'Carminative Toilet Lotion' removes the slight pimples which sometimes appear inopportunely on ladies' faces, and contravene their projects for the ball; it refreshes and revives the color by opening or closing the pores of the skin in accordance with the exigencies of the temperament, while its efficacy in arresting the ravages of time is so well known already that many ladies, out of gratitude, call it the 'Friend of Beauty.'

"Eau-de-Cologne is purely and simply an ordinary perfume without special efficacy, while the Superfine Pâte des Sultanes and the Carminative Toilet Lotion are two active remedies, powerful agents, perfectly harmless in their operation of seconding the efforts of nature; their perfumes, essentially balsamic and exhilarating, admirably refresh the animal spirits, and charm and revive ideas. Their merits are as marvelous as their simplicity; in short, to woman they offer an added charm, while a means of attraction is put within the reach of man.

"The daily use of the Carminative Toilet Lotion allays the smarting sensation caused by shaving, while it keeps the lips red and smooth, and prevents chapping; it gradually dissipates freckles by natural means; and finally, it restores tone to the complexion. These results are the signs of that perfect equilibrium of the

humors of the body, which ensures immunity from the migraine to those who are subject to that distressing complaint. In short, the Carminative Toilet Lotion, which may be used in all the operations of the toilet, is a preventive of cutaneous affections, by permitting free transpiration through the tissues, while imparting a permanent bloom to the skin.

"All communications should be prepaid, and addressed to M. César Birotteau (late Ragon), Perfumer to her late Majesty, Queen Marie-Antoinette, at the 'Queen of Roses,' Rue Saint-Honoré, near the Place Vendôme, Paris.

"The price of the Pâte is three livres per tablet, and of the Toilet Lotion, six livres per bottle.

"To prevent fradulent imitations, M. Birotteau warns the public that the wrapper of every tablet bears his signature, and that his name is stamped on every bottle of the Toilet Lotion."

The success of this scheme was due, as a matter of fact (though César did not suspect it), to Constance, who proposed that they should send sample cases of the Carminative Toilet Lotion and the Superfine Pâte des Sultanes to every perfumer in France or abroad, offering, at the same time, a discount of thirty per cent as an inducement to take a gross of either article at a time.

The Pâte and the Lotion were really better than similar cosmetics, and the simple were attracted by that distinction made between the two temperaments. The discount was tempting to hundreds of perfumers all over France, and each would take annually three hundred gross or more of both preparations; and if the profits on each article were small, the demand was great, and the output enormous. César was able to buy the sheds and the plot of land in the Faubourg du Temple. He built a large factory there, and had the *Queen of Roses* magnificently decorated. The household began to feel the small comforts of an easier existence, and the wife quaked less than heretofore.

In 1810 Mme. César predicted a rise in house rents. At her instance her husband took the lease of the whole house above the shop, and they removed from the mezzanine floor

(where they had begun housekeeping together) to the first floor. A piece of luck which befell them about this time decided Constance to shut her eyes to Birotteau's follies in the matter of decorating a room for her. The perfumer was made a judge of the Tribunal of Commerce. It was his character for integrity and conscientiousness, together with the esteem in which he was held, that gained this dignity for him; thenceforward he must be considered as a notable among the tradesmen of Paris.

He used to rise at five o'clock in the morning to read handbooks on jurisprudence and works which treated of commercial law. With his instinct for fair dealing, his uprightness, his readiness to take trouble—all qualities essential for the appreciation of the knotty points submitted to arbitration—he was one of the most highly esteemed judges in the Tribunal. His faults contributed no less to his reputation. César was so conscious of his inferiority that he was ready and willing to take his colleagues' opinion, and they were flattered by the attention with which he listened to them. Some of them thought a good deal of the silent approbation of such a listener, reputed to be a hard-headed man; others were delighted with his amiability and modesty, and extolled him on those grounds. Those amenable to his jurisdiction lauded his benevolence and conciliatory spirit, and he was often called in to act as arbitrator in disputes wherein his homely sense suggested to him a kind of Cadi's justice.

He managed to invent and use throughout his term of office a style of his own; it was stuffed with platitudes, interspersed with trite sayings, and pieces of reasoning rounded into phrases which came out without effort, and sounded like eloquence in the ears of shallow people. In this way he commended himself to the naturally mediocre majority, condemned to penal servitude for life and to views of the earth earthy.

César lost so much time at the Tribunal that his wife put pressure upon him, and thenceforward he declined the costly honor.

In the year 1813 this household, thanks to its constant unity, after plodding along through life in a humdrum fashion, entered upon an era of prosperity which nothing seemingly ought to check.

M. and Mme. Ragon (their predecessors), Uncle Pillerault, Roguin the notary, the Matifats (druggists in the Rue des Lombards who supplied the *Queen of Roses*), Joseph Lebas (a retail draper, a leading light in the Rue Saint-Denis, successor to Guillaume at the *Cat and Racket*), Judge Popinot (Mme. Ragon's brother), Chiffreville (of the firm of Protez & Chiffreville), M. Cochin (a clerk of the Treasury, and a sleeping partner in Matifat's business), his wife, Mme. Cochin, and the Abbé Loraux (confessor and director of the devout among this little circle) made up, with one or two others, the number of their acquaintance. César Birotteau might be a Royalist, but public opinion at that time was in his favor; and though he had scarcely a hundred thousand francs beside his business, was looked upon as a very wealthy man. His steady-going ways, his punctuality, his habit of paying ready money for everything, of never discounting bills, while he would take paper to oblige a customer of whom he was sure,—all these things, together with his readiness to oblige, had brought him a great reputation. And not only so; he had really made a good deal of money, but the building of his factories had absorbed most of it, and he paid nearly twenty thousand francs a year in rent. The education of their only daughter, whom Constance and César both idolized, had been a heavy expense. Neither the husband nor the wife thought of money where Césarine's pleasure was concerned, and they had never brought themselves to part with her.

Imagine the delight of the poor peasant-parvenu when he heard his charming Césarine play a sonata by Steibelt or sing a ballad; when he saw her writing French correctly, or making sepia drawings of landscape, or listened while she read aloud from the Racines, father and son, and explained the beauties of the poetry. What happiness it was for him to live again in this fair, innocent flower, not yet plucked from the parent

stem; this angel, over whose growing graces and earliest development they had watched with such passionate tenderness; this only child, incapable of despising her father or of laughing at his want of education, so much was she his little daughter.

When César came to Paris, he had known how to read, write, and cipher, and at that point his education had been arrested. There had been no opportunity in his hard-working life of acquiring new ideas and information beyond the perfumery trade. He had spent his time among folk to whom science and literature were matters of indifference, and whose knowledge was of a limited and special kind; he himself, having no time to spare for loftier studies, became perforce a practical man. He adopted (how should he have done otherwise?) the language, errors, and opinions of the Parisian tradesman who admires Molière, Voltaire, and Rousseau on hearsay, and buys their works, but never opens them; who will have it that the proper way to pronounce *armoire* is *ormoire*: *or* means gold, and *moire* means silk, and women's dresses used almost always to be made of silk, and in their cupboards they locked up silk and gold—therefore, *ormoire* is right and *armoire* is an innovation. Potier, Talma, Mlle. Mars, and other actors and actresses were millionaires ten times over, and did not live like ordinary mortals; the great tragedian lived on raw meat, and Mlle. Mars would have a fricassee of pearls now and then—an idea she had taken from some celebrated Egyptian actress. As to the Emperor, his waistcoat pockets were lined with leather, so that he could take a handful of snuff at a time; he used to ride at full gallop up the staircase of the orangery at Versailles. Authors and artists ended in the workhouse, the natural close to their eccentric careers; they were, every one of them, atheists into the bargain, so that you had to be very careful not to admit anybody of that sort into your house. Joseph Lebas used to advert with horror to the story of his sister-in-law Augustine who married the artist Sommervieux. Astronomers lived on spiders. These bright examples of the attitude of the bour-

geois mind towards philology, the drama, politics, and science will throw light upon its breadth of view and powers of comprehension.

Let a poet pass along the Rue des Lombards, and some stray sweet scent shall set him dreaming of the East; for him, with the odor of the Khuskus grass, would come a vision of Nautch girls in an Eastern bath. The brilliant red lac would call up thoughts of Vedic hymns, of alien creeds and castes; and at a chance contact with an ivory tusk, he would mount an elephant and make love, like the king of Lahore, in a muslin-curtained howdah.

But the petty tradesman does not so much as know whence the raw materials of his business are brought. Of natural history or of chemistry, Birotteau the perfumer, for instance, knew nothing whatever. It is true that he regarded Vauquelin as a great man, but Vauquelin was an exception. César himself was about on a par with the retired grocer, who summed up a discussion on the ways of growing tea by announcing with a knowing air that "there are only two ways of obtaining tea—from Havre or by the overland route." And Birotteau thought that aloes and opium were only to be found in the Rue des Lombards. People told you that attar of roses came from Constantinople, but, like eau-de-cologne, it was made in Paris. These names of foreign places were humbug; they had been invented to amuse the French nation, who cannot abide anything that is made in France. A French merchant has to call his discovery an English invention, or people will not buy it; it is just the same in England, the druggists there tell you that things come from France.

Yet César was not altogether a fool or a dunce; an honest and kind heart shed a lustre over everything that he did and made his a worthy life, and a kindly deed absolves all possible forms of ignorance. His unvarying success gave him assurance; and, in Paris, assurance, the sign of power, is taken for power itself.

César's wife, who had learned to know her husband's character during the early years of their marriage, led a life of

perpetual terror; she represented sound sense and foresight in the partnership; she was doubt, opposition, and fear, while César represented boldness, ambition, activity, the element of chance and undreamed-of good luck. In spite of appearances, the merchant was the weaker vessel, and it was the wife who really had the patience and courage. So it had come to pass that a timid mediocrity, without education, knowledge, or strength of character, a being who could in nowise have succeeded in the world's slipperiest places, was taken for a remarkable man, a man of spirit and resolution, thanks to his instinctive uprightness and sense of justice, to the goodness of a truly Christian soul, and love for the one woman who had been his.

The public only see results. Of all César's circle, only Pillerault and Judge Popinot saw beneath the surface; none of the rest could pronounce on his character. Those twenty or thirty friends, moreover, who met at one another's houses, retailed the same platitudes, repeated the same stale commonplaces, and each one among them regarded himself as superior to his company. There was a rivalry among the women in dinners and dress; each one summed up her husband in some contemptuous word.

Mme. Birotteau alone had the good sense to show respect and deference to her husband in public. She saw in him the man who, in spite of his private weaknesses, had made the wealth and earned the esteem which she shared along with him; though she sometimes privately wondered if all men who were spoken of as superior intellects were like her husband. This attitude of hers contributed not a little to maintain the respect and esteem shown by others to the merchant, in a country where wives are quick-witted enough to belittle their husbands and to complain of them.

The first days of the year 1814, so fatal to Imperial France, were memorable in the Birotteau household for two events, which would have passed almost unnoticed anywhere else; but they were of a kind to leave a deep impression on simple souls like César and his wife, who, looking back upon their past, found no painful memories.

They had engaged a young man of two-and-twenty, Ferdinand du Tillet by name, as first assistant. The lad had come to them from another house in the perfumery trade, where they had declined to give him a percentage of the profits. He was thought to be a genius, and he had been very anxious to go to the *Queen of Roses,* knowing the place, and the people, and their ways. Birotteau had engaged him at a salary of a thousand francs, meaning that du Tillet should be his successor. This Ferdinand du Tillet was destined to exercise so great an influence over the family fortunes, that a few words must be said about him.

He had begun life simply on his Christian name of Ferdinand. There was an immense advantage in anonymity, he thought, at a time when Napoleon was pressing the young men of every family into the army; but if he had no name, he had been born somewhere, and owed his birth to some cruel or voluptuous fancy. Here, in brief, are the few facts known as to his name and designation.

In 1793 a poor girl of Tillet, a little hamlet near the Andelys, bore a child one night in the curé's garden at Tillet, tapped on the shutters, and then drowned herself. The good man received the child, named him after the saint of that day in the calendar, and reared him as if he had been his own son. In 1804 the curé died, and the little property that he left was insufficient to complete the education thus begun. Ferdinand, thrown upon Paris, there led the life of a freebooter, amid chances that might bring him to the scaffold or to fortune, to the bar, the army, commerce, or private life. Ferdinand, compelled to live like a very Figaro, first became a commercial traveler, then, after traveling round France, and seeing life, became a perfumer's assistant, with a fixed determination to make his way at all costs. In 1813 he considered is expedient to ascertain his age, and to acquire a status as a citizen; he therefore petitioned the Tribunal of the Andelys to transfer the entry of his baptism from the church records to the mayor's register; and, further, he asked that they should insert the surname of du Tillet, which he had assumed, on

the ground of his exposure at birth in the commune of that name.

He had neither father nor mother; he had no guardian save the procureur-impérial; he was alone in the world, and owed no account of himself to any one; society was to him a harsh stepdame, and he showed no mercy in his dealings with society, knew no guide but his own interests, found all means of success permissible. The Norman, armed with these dangerous capacities, combined with his desire to succeed the crabbed faults for which the natives of his province are, rightly or wrongly, blamed. Beneath his insinuating manner there was a contentious spirit; he was a most formidable antagonist—a blustering litigant, disputing another's least rights audaciously, while he never yielded a point himself. He had time on his side, and wearied out his opponent by his inflexible pertinacity. His principal merits were those of the Scapins of old comedy; he possessed their fertility of resource, their skill in sailing near the wind, their itch to seize on what seems good to have and hold. Indeed, he meant to apply to his poverty a motto which the Abbé Terray applied in statecraft; he would make a clean record by turning honest later on.

He was endowed with strenuous energy, with the military intrepidity which demands good deeds or bad indifferently of everybody, justifying his demand by the theory of personal interest; he was bound to succeed; he had too great a scorn of human nature; he believed too firmly that all men have their price; he was too little troubled by scruples as to the choice of means, when all were alike permissible; his eyes were too fixedly set upon the success and wealth that should purchase absolution for a system of morals which worked thus not to be successful.

Such a man, between the convict's prison on the one hand, and millions upon the other, must of necessity become vindictive, domineering, swift in his decisions, a dissembling Cromwell scheming to cut off the head of probity. A light, mocking wit concealed the depth of his character; mere shop-

man though he was, his ambition knew no bounds; he had comprehended society in one glance of hatred, and said to himself, "You are in my power." He had vowed that he would not marry before he was forty years old. He kept his word with himself.

As to Ferdinand's outward appearance, he was a slim, well-shaped young fellow, with adaptable manners that enabled him at need to take any tone through the whole gamut of society. At first sight his weasel face was not displeasing; but after more observation, you detected the strange expressions which are visible on the surface of those who are not at peace with themselves, or who hear at times the warning voice of conscience. His hard high color glowed under the soft Norman skin. There was a furtive look in the wall-eyes, lined with silver leaf, which grew terrible when they were fixed full on his victim. His voice was husky, as if he had been speaking for long. The thin lips were not unpleasing, but the sharply-pointed nose and slightly rounded forehead revealed a defect of race. Indeed, the coloring of his hair, which looked as if it had been dyed black, indicated the social half-breed, who had his cleverness from a dissolute great lord, his low ideas from the peasant girl, the victim of seduction; who owed his knowledge to an incomplete education; whose vices were those of the waif and stray.

Birotteau learned, to his unbounded amazement, that his assistant went out very elegantly arrayed, came in very late, and went to balls at bankers' and notaries' houses. These habits found no favor with César. To his way of thinking, a shopman should study the ledgers, and think of nothing but the business. The perfumer had no patience with folly. He spoke gently to du Tillet about wearing such fine linen, about visiting cards, which bore the name *F. du Tillet*—manners and customs which, according to his commercial jurisprudence, should be confined to the fashionable world.

But Ferdinand had established himself in this house to play Tartuffe to Birotteau's Orgon; he paid court to Mme. César, tried to seduce her, and gauging his employer with

appalling quickness, judged him as his wife had previously judged. Du Tillet only said what he meant to say, and was both reserved and discreet; but he unveiled opinions of mankind and views of life in a fashion that dismayed a timorous, conscientious woman, who thought it a sin to do the slightest wrong to her neighbor. In spite of the tact which Mme. Birotteau employed, du Tillet felt her contempt for him; and Constance, to whom Ferdinand had written several amorous epistles, soon noticed a change in the manners of her assistant. He began to behave presumptuously, to give others the impression that there was an understanding between them. Without informing her husband of her private reasons, she recommended him to dismiss the man, and Birotteau was of his wife's opinion on this head. Du Tillet's dismissal was resolved upon; but one evening, on the Saturday before he gave notice, Birotteau balanced his books, as he was wont to do every month, and found that he was three thousand francs short. He was in terrible consternation. It was not so much the actual loss that affected him as the suspicion that hung over his three assistants and the servant, the errand-boy, and the workmen. On whom was he to lay the blame? Mme. Birotteau was never away from the cash desk. The book-keeper, who lodged in the house, was a young man of eighteen, Popinot by name, a nephew of M. Ragon, and honesty itself. Indeed, on Popinot's own showing, the money was missing, for the cash did not agree with the balance. Husband and wife agreed to say nothing, and to watch every one in the house.

Monday came, and their friends came to spend the evening. Every family in this set entertained in turn. While they played at *bouillotte,* Roguin the notary put down on the table some old louis-d'or which Mme. César had taken some days before of a bride, Mme. d'Espart.

"Have you been robbing the poor-box?" asked the perfumer, laughing.

Roguin said that he had won the money of du Tillet at a banker's house on the previous evening, and du Tillet bore

him out in this without a blush. As for the perfumer, he turned crimson. When the visitors had gone, and Ferdinand was about to go to bed, Birotteau called him down into the shop, on pretence of business to discuss.

"We are three thousand francs short in the cash, du Tillet," the good man said, "and I cannot suspect anybody. The matter of the old louis-d'or seems to be too much against you to be passed over entirely, so we will not go to bed till we have found out the mistake, for, after all, it can be nothing but a mistake. Very likely you took the louis on account of your salary."

Du Tillet owned to having taken the louis. The perfumer thereupon opened the ledger; the assistant's account had not yet been debited with the sum.

"I was in a hurry. I ought to have asked Popinot to enter it," said Ferdinand.

"Quite true," said Birotteau, disconcerted by this off-hand coolness. The Norman had taken the measure of the good folk among whom he had come with a view to making his fortune.

The perfumer and his assistant spent the night in checking the books, the worthy merchant knowing all the while that it was trouble thrown away. As he came and went he slipped three banknotes of a thousand francs each into the safe, pressing them between the side of the drawer and the groove in the safe; then he pretended to be tired out, seemed to be fast asleep, and snored. Du Tillet awakened him in triumph, and showed exaggerated delight over the discovery of the mistake.

The next morning Birotteau scolded little Popinot and Mme. César in public, and waxed wrathful over their carelessness.

A fortnight later, Ferdinand du Tillet entered a stockbroker's office. The perfumery trade did not suit him, he said; he wanted to study banking. At the same time, he spoke of Mme. César in a way that gave the impression that motives of jealousy had procured his dismissal.

A few months later du Tillet came to see his late employer, and asked him to be his surety for twenty thousand francs, to complete the guarantees required in a matter which was to put him in the way of making his fortune. Seeing Birotteau's surprise at this piece of effrontery, du Tillet scowled and asked the perfumer whether he had no confidence in him. Matifat and two men with whom Birotteau did business were there at the time; his indignation did not escape them, though he controlled his anger in their presence. Perhaps du Tillet had returned to honesty; a gambling debt or some woman in distress might have been at the root of that error of his; and the fact that an honest man publicly declined to have anything to do with him might launch a man, still young, and perhaps penitent, on a career of crime and misfortune. The angel of mercy took up the pen and set his signature on du Tillet's papers, saying as he did so that he was heartily glad to do a small service for a lad who had been very useful to him. The color came into the good man's face as he told that kindly lie. Du Tillet could not meet his eyes, and doubtless at that moment vowed an eternal enmity, the truceless hate that the angels of darkness bear the angels of light.

Du Tillet kept his balance so skilfully upon the tight rope of speculation, that he was always fashionably dressed, and was apparently rich long before he was rich in reality. When he set up a cabriolet he never put it down again; he held his own in the lofty spheres where pleasure and business are mingled, among the Turcarets of the epoch for whom the crush-room of the Opéra is a branch of the Stock Exchange.

Thanks to Mme. Roguin, whom he had met among the Birotteaus' circle, he became rapidly known in high financial regions. Ferdinand du Tillet had attained a prosperity in nowise delusive; he was on an excellent footing with the firm of Nucingen, to whom Roguin had introduced him; and he had not been slow to secure the Keller connection, and to make friends among the upper banking world. Nobody knew where the young fellow found the vast capital which

he could command, but they set down his luck to his intelligence and honesty.

The Restoration made a personage of César Birotteau, and, in the vortex of political crises, he not unnaturally forgot these two cross events in his household. The tenacity with which he had held to his opinions—for though since his wound it had been a strictly passive tenacity, he still held to his principles for decency's sake—had brought him patronage in high quarters, precisely because he had asked for nothing. He received an appointment as major in the National Guard, though he did not so much as know a single word of command.

In 1815 Napoleon, inimical as ever to Birotteau, ejected him from his post. During the Hundred Days, Birotteau became the *bête noire* of the Liberals in his quarter; for party feeling began to run high in that year among the commercial class, who hitherto had been unanimous in voting for peace for business reasons.

After the second Restoration, the Royalist Government found it necessary to manipulate the municipal body. The prefect wanted to transform Birotteau into a mayor, but, thanks to his wife, the perfumer accepted the less conspicuous position of deputy-mayor. His modesty added not a little to his reputation, and brought him the friendship of the mayor, M. Flamet de la Billardière. Birotteau, who had seen him at the *Queen of Roses* in the days when Royalist plotters used to meet at Ragon's shop, suggested his name to the Prefect of the Seine, who consulted the perfumer on the choice. M. and Mme. Birotteau were never forgotten in the mayor's invitations, and Mme. Birotteau often asked for charitable subscriptions at Saint-Roch in good society.

La Billardière warmly supported Birotteau when it was proposed to distribute the Crosses awarded to the municipal body; when names were being weighed, he laid stress upon César's wound received at Saint-Roch, on his attachment to the Bourbons, and on the respect in which Birotteau was held. So the minister, who, while he endeavored to undo the work

of Napoleon, was wishful to make creatures of his own, and to secure partisans for the Bourbons from the ranks of commerce, and among men of art and science, included Birotteau in the list of those to be distinguished.

This favor, together with the glory which César already shed around him in his Arrondissement, put him in a position that was bound to magnify the ideas of a man who had met hitherto with nothing but success; and when the mayor told him of the approaching distinction, it was the final argument which urged the perfumer into the speculation which he had just disclosed to his wife; for it opened up a way of quitting the perfumery trade, and of rising to the upper ranks of the Parisian bourgeoisie.

César was forty years old. Hard work at his factory had set one or two premature wrinkles in his face, and slightly silvered the long bushy hair, on which the constant pressure of his hat had impressed a glossy ring. The outlines of his hair described five points on his forehead, which told a story of simplicity of life. There was nothing alarming about the bushy eyebrows, for the blue eyes, with their clear, straightforward expression, were in keeping with the honest man's brow. His nose, broken at his birth, and blunt at the tip, gave him the astonished look of the typical Parisian cockney. His lips were very thick, his chin heavy and straight. It was a high-colored face with square outlines, and a peculiar disposition of the wrinkles,—altogether it was of the ingenuous, shrewd peasant type; and his evident physical strength, his sturdy limbs, broad shoulders, and big feet, all denoted the countryman transported to Paris. The large hands, covered with hair, the creases in the plump finger-joints, and broad, square-shaped nails at the tips, would alone have attested his origin if there had not been signs of it about his whole person.

He always wore the bland smile with which a shopkeeper welcomes a customer; but this smile, assumed for business purposes in his case, was the outward and visible expression of inward content, and reflected the serenity of a kindly soul.

His distrust of his species was strictly confined to the business; he parted company with his shrewdness as he came away from the Exchange or shut his ledger. Suspicion for him was one of the exigencies of business, like his printed bill-heads.

There was a comical mixture of assurance, fatuity, and good-nature in his face, which gave it a certain character of its own, and redeemed it, to some extent, from the vapid uniformity of Parisian bourgeois countenances. But for the expression of artless wonder and trustfulness, people would have stood too much in awe of him; it was thus that he paid his quota of absurdity that put him on a footing of equality with his kind.

It was a habit of his to cross his hands behind him while speaking; and when he meant to say something particularly civil or striking, he gradually raised himself on tiptoe once or twice, and came down heavily upon his heels, as if to emphasize his remark. Sometimes in the height of a discussion he would suddenly swing himself round, take a step or two as if in search of objections, and then turn abruptly upon his opponent. He never interrupted anybody, and not seldom fell a victim to his finer punctilious observance of good manners, for others did not scruple to take the words out of his mouth, and when the worthy man came away he had been unable to put in a word.

In his wide experience of business he had acquired habits which others sometimes described as a mania. For instance, if a bill had not been met, he would put it in the hands of the process-server, and give himself no further trouble about it, save to receive the capital, interest, and court expenses. The matter might drive the customer into bankruptcy, and then César went no further. He never attended a meeting of creditors; his name never appeared in any list; he kept his claims. This system, together with an implacable contempt for bankrupts, had been handed down to him by old M. Ragon, who, after a long commercial experience, had come to the conclusion that the meagre and uncertain dividend paid

under the circumstances was a very poor return for the time wasted in law proceedings, and held that he could spend his time to better purpose than in running about after excuses for dishonesty.

"If the bankrupt is an honest man, and makes his way again, he will pay you," M. Ragon was wont to say. "If he has nothing, and is simply unfortunate, what is the good of tormenting him? And if he is a rogue, you will get nothing in any case. If you have a name for being hard on people, they will not try to make terms with you; and so long as they can pay at all, you are the man whom they will pay."

César kept his appointments punctually; he would wait for ten minutes, and nothing would induce him to stay any longer, a characteristic which was a cause of punctuality in others who had to do with him.

His dress was in keeping with his appearance and habits. No power on earth would have induced him to resign the white lawn neck-cloths with drooping ends, embroidered by his wife or daughter. His white drill waistcoats, adorned with a double row of buttons, descended low upon his prominent abdomen, for Birotteau was inclined to corpulence. He wore blue breeches, black silk stockings, and walking-shoes adorned with ribbon bows that were apt to come unfastened. Out of doors his too ample green overcoat and broad-brimmed hat gave him a somewhat Quakerly appearance. On Sunday evenings he wore a coat of chestnut-brown cloth, with long tails and ample skirts, and black silk breeches; the corners of the inevitable waistcoat were turned down a little to display the pleated shirt-front beneath, and there were gold buckles on his shoes. Until the year 1819 his person was further adorned by two parallel lines of watch-chain, but he only wore the second when in full dress.

Such was César Birotteau—a worthy soul, from whom the mysterious powers that preside at the making of man had withheld the faculty of seeing life or politics as a whole, and the capacity of rising above the social level of the lower middle class; in all things he was destined to follow in the ruts

of the old road; he had caught his opinions like an infection, and he put them in practice without examining into them. But if he was blind, he was a good man; if he was not very clever, he was deeply religious, and his heart was pure. In that heart there shone but one love, the light of his life and its motive power; for his desire to rise in the world, like the meagre knowledge that he had learned in it, had its source in his love for his wife and daughter.

As for Mme. César, at that time, at the age of thirty-seven, she so exactly resembled the Venus of Milo, that when the Duc de Rivière sent the beautiful statue to France, all her acquaintance recognized the likeness. A few short months, and trouble so swiftly spread its sallow tinge over the dazzling fairness of her face, so ruthlessly darkened and hollowed the blue-veined circles in which the beautiful hazel eyes were set, that she came to look like an aged Madonna; for in the wreck of her beauty she never lost her sweet ingenuousness, though there was a sad expression in the clear eyes; and it was impossible not to see in her a still beautiful woman, staid in her demeanor, and full of dignity. Moreover, during this ball of César's planning, her beauty was to shine forth radiantly for the last time to the admiration of beholders.

Every life has its apogee; there is a time in every existence when active causes bring about exactly proportionate results. This high noon of life, when the vital forces are evenly balanced and put forth in all the glory of their strength, is common not only to organic life; you will find it even in the history of cities and nations and institutions and ideas, in commerce, and in every kind of human effort, for, like noble families and dynasties, these too have their birth and rise and fall.

How comes it that this argument of waxing and waning is applied so inexorably to everything throughout the system of things?—to death as to life; for in times of pestilence, death runs his course, abates, returns again, lies dormant. Who knows but that our globe itself is a rocket somewhat longer lived than other fireworks?

History, telling over and over again the reasons of the rise and fall of all that has been in the world in the past, might be a warning to man that there is a moment when the active play of all his faculties must cease; but neither conquerors, nor actors, nor women, nor writers heed the wholesome admonition. César Birotteau, who should have looked upon himself as having reached the apogee of his career, mistook the summit for the starting-point. He did not know the reason of the downfalls of which history is full; nay, neither kings nor peoples have made any effort to engrave in imperishable characters the causes of the catastrophes of which the history of royal and of commercial houses affords such conspicuous examples. Why should not pyramids be reared anew to put us constantly in mind of the immutable law which should govern the affairs of nations as well as of individuals: *When the effect produced is no longer in direct relation with nor in exact proportion to the cause, disorganization sets in?* And yet—these monuments are all about us—in legends, in the stones that cry out to us of a past, and bear perpetual record to the freaks of a stubborn Fate whose hand sweeps away our illusions, and makes it clear to us that the greatest events resolve themselves at last into an Idea, and the "Tale of Troy" and the "Story of Napoleon" are poems and nothing more.

Would that this story might be the Epic of the Bourgeoisie; there are dealings of Fate with man which inspire no voice, because they lack grandeur, yet are even for that very reason immense: for this is not the story of an isolated soul, but of a whole nation of sorrows.

César as he dropped off to sleep feared that his wife might bring forward some peremptory objection in the morning, and laid it upon himself to wake betimes and settle everything. As soon as it grew light, he rose noiselessly, leaving his wife asleep, dressed quickly, and went down into the shop just as the boy was taking down the numbered shutters. Birotteau, finding himself in solitary possession, stood waiting in the doorway for the assistants, watching critically meanwhile

the way in which Raguet the errand boy discharged his duties, for Birotteau was an old hand. The weather was magnificent in spite of the cold.

"Popinot, fetch your hat and your walking shoes, and tell M. Célestin to come down; you and I will go to the Tuileries and have a little talk together," said he, when Anselme came.

Popinot, that admirable foil to du Tillet, whom one of those happy chances which induce a belief in a protecting Providence had established in César's household, will play so great a part in this story, that it is necessary to give a sketch of him here.

Mme. Ragon's maiden name was Popinot. She had two brothers. One of them, the youngest of the family, was at the present time a judge in the Tribunal of First Instance of the Seine. The older had gone into the wool-trade, had lost his patrimony, and died, leaving his only son to the Ragons and his brother the judge, who had no children. The child's mother had died at his birth.

Mme. Ragon had found this situation for her nephew, and hoped to see him succeed to Birotteau. Anselme Popinot (for that was his name) was short and club-footed, a dispensation common to Byron, Sir Walter Scott, and Talleyrand, lest others thus afflicted should be too much discouraged. He had the brilliant complexion covered with freckles which usually distinguishes red-haired people; but a clear forehead, eyes like agates streaked with gray, a pretty mouth, a pale face, the charm of youthful diffidence, and a want of confidence in himself, due to his physical deformity, aroused a kindly feeling towards him in others. We love the weak, and people felt interested in Popinot.

Little Popinot, as everybody called him, took after his family. They were people essentially religious, whose virtues were informed by intelligence, whose quiet lives were full of good deeds. So the child, brought up by his uncle the judge, united all the qualities pleasing in youth; he was a good and affectionate boy, a little bashful, but full of enthusiasm; docile as a lamb, but hard-working, faithful, and

steady, endowed with all the virtues of a Christian in the early days of the Church.

When Popinot heard of the proposed walk to the Tuileries, the most unlooked-for remark that his awe-inspiring employer could have made at that time of day, his thoughts went to his own settlement in life, and thence all at once to Césarine, the real queen of roses, the living sign of the house. He had fallen in love on his very first day in the shop, two months before du Tillet's departure. He was obliged to stop more than once on his way upstairs, his heart so swelled, and his pulses beat so hard.

In another moment he came down, followed by Célestin, the first assistant. Then Anselme and his employer set out without a word for the Tuileries.

Anselme Popinot was just twenty-one years of age; Birotteau had married at one-and-twenty, so Anselme saw no hindrance to his marriage with Césarine on that score. It was her beauty and her father's wealth that set enormous obstacles in the way of such ambitious wishes as his, but love grows with every up-leaping of hope; the wilder the hopes, the more he clung to them, and his longings grew the stronger for the distance between him and his love. Happy boy, who in a time when all and sundry are brought down to the same level, when every head is crowned with a precisely similar hat, can still contrive to create a distance between a perfumer's daughter and himself—the scion of an old Parisian family! And he was happy, in spite of his doubts and fears; every day of his life he sat next to Césarine at dinner; he set about his business with a zeal and enthusiasm that left no element of drudgery in his work; he did everything in the name of Césarine, and never wearied. At one-and-twenty devotion is food sufficient for love.

"He will be a merchant some of these days; he will get on," César would say, speaking of Anselme to Mme. Ragon, and he would praise Anselme's activity in the filling-out department, extolling his quickness at comprehending the mysteries of the craft, relating how that, when goods were to be sent

off in a hurry, Anselme would roll up his sleeves and work bare-armed at packing the cases and nailing down the lids, and the lame lad would do more than all the rest of them put together.

There was another serious obstacle in the way of the orphan's success. It was a well-known and recognized fact that Alexandre Crottat, Roguin's head-clerk, the son of a rich farmer of la Brie, hoped to marry Césarine; and there were other difficulties yet more formidable. In the depths of Popinot's heart there lay buried sad secrets which set a yet wider gulf between him and Césarine. The Ragons, on whom he might have counted, were in difficulties; the orphan boy was happy to take them his scanty salary to help them to eke out a living. But in spite of all these things, he hoped to succeed! More than once he had caught a glance from Césarine, and beneath her apparent pride he had dared to read a secret thought full of tender hopes in the depths of her blue eyes. So he worked on, set in a ferment by that gleam of hope, tremulous and mute, like all young men in a like case when life is breaking into blossom.

"Popinot," the good man began, "is your aunt quite well?"

"Yes, sir."

"Somehow she has seemed to me to have an anxious look for some time past; can something have gone askew with them? Look here, my boy, you must not make a stranger of me, that am almost like one of the family, for I have known your Uncle Ragon these five-and-twenty years. When I first came to him, I was fresh from the country, and wore a pair of hobnailed boots. They call the place the Treasury Farm, but all I brought away with me was one gold louis which my godmother gave me, Madame the late Marquise d'Uxelles, who was related to le Duc and Mme. la Duchesse de Lenoncourt, who are among our patrons. So I always say a prayer every Sunday for her and all the family: and her niece, Mme. de Mortsauf, in Touraine, has all her perfumery from us. Customers are always coming to me through them. There is M. de Vandenesse, for example, who spends twelve hundred

francs with us every year. One ought to be grateful from prudence, if one is not grateful by nature; but I am a well-wisher to you, without an afterthought, and for your own sake."

"Ah, sir, if you will allow me to say so, you had a level head."

"No, my boy, no; that won't do everything. I don't say that my headpiece isn't as good as another's, but I stuck to honesty through thick and thin; I was steady, and I never loved any one but my wife. Love is a fine *vehicle,* a neat expression of M. de Villèle's yesterday at the Tribune."

"Love!" cried Popinot. "Oh! sir, do you——?"

"Stop a bit, stop a bit! There is old Roguin coming along the further side of the Place Louis XV. at eight o'clock in the morning. What can the old boy be about?" said César to himself, and he forgot Anselme Popinot and the hazel-nut oil.

His wife's theories came up in his memory, and instead of turning into the garden of the Tuileries, he walked on to meet the notary. Anselme followed at a distance, quite at a loss to explain the sudden interest which Birotteau appeared to take in a matter so unimportant; but very happy in the encouragement which he derived from his employer's little speech about hobnailed boots, and louis-d'or, and love.

Roguin, a tall, burly man, with a pimpled face, an almost bald forehead, and black hair, had not formerly been lacking in comeliness; and he had been young and ambitious once too, and from a mere clerk had come to be a notary; but now a keen observer would have read in his face the exhaustion and fatigue of a jaded seeker after pleasure. When a man plunges into the mire of excess, his face hardly escapes without a splash, and the lines engraved on Roguin's countenance and its florid color were alike ignoble. Instead of the pure glow which suffuses the tissues of men of temperate life and imparts a bloom of health, there was visible in Roguin the tainted blood inflamed by a strain against which the body rebelled. His nose was meanly turned up at the end, as is apt to be the case with those in whom humors taking this channel

induce an internal affection, which a virtuous Queen of France innocently believed to be a misfortune common to the species, never having approached any man but the King sufficiently closely to discover her mistake. Roguin's efforts to disguise his infirmity by taking quantities of Spanish snuff served rather to aggravate the troublesome symptoms, which had been the principal cause of his misfortunes.

Is it not carrying flattery of society somewhat too far to paint individuals always in false colors, to conceal in certain cases the real causes of their vicissitudes, so often brought about by disease? Physical ills, in their moral aspects and the influences that they bring to bear on the mechanism of life, have perhaps been too much neglected hitherto by the historian of manners. Mme. César had rightly guessed the secret of Roguin's married life.

His wife, a charming girl, the only daughter of Chevrel, the banker, felt an unconquerable repugnance for the poor notary, which dated from the night of her marriage, and had been determined to demand an immediate divorce. But Roguin, too happy to have a wife who brought him five hundred thousand francs, to say nothing of her expectations, had implored her not to enter her plea, leaving her her liberty, and accepting all the consequences of such a compact. Mme. Roguin, mistress of the situation, treated her husband as a courtesan treats an elderly adorer. Roguin soon found his wife too dear, and, like many another Parisian, had a second establishment in the town. At first the expenditure did not exceed a moderate limit.

For a while Roguin found, at no great outlay, grisettes who were too glad of his protection; but at the end of three years he fell a prey to a violent sexagenarian passion for one of the most magnificent creatures of the time, known as *La belle Hollandaise* in the calendars of prostitution, for she shortly afterwards fell back into that gulf, which her death made illustrious. One of Roguin's clients had formerly brought her to Paris from Bruges; and when, in 1815, political considerations forced him to fly, he made her over to the notary.

Roguin had taken a little house in the Champs-Élysées for his enchantress; he had furnished it handsomely, and had allowed himself to be led by her, until he had squandered away his fortune to satisfy her extravagant whims.

The gloomy expression, which vanished from Roguin's countenance at the sight of his client, was connected with mysterious events, wherein lay the secret of du Tillet's rapid success. While du Tillet was still under Birotteau's roof, on the first Sunday which gave him an opportunity of observing how M. and Mme. Roguin were situated with regard to each other, his plans had undergone a change. His designs upon Mme. César had been subordinated to another purpose; he had meant to compel an offer of Césarine's hand as compensation for repulsed advances; but it cost him the less to give up this marriage since he had discovered that César was not rich, as he had believed. Then du Tillet played the spy on the notary, insinuated himself into his confidence, obtained an introduction to *La belle Hollandaise,* ascertained the terms on which she stood with Roguin, and learned that she was threatening to dismiss her adorer if he curtailed her extravagance. *La belle Hollandaise* was one of those scatter-brained creatures who take money without disturbing themselves as to how it was made, or how they come by it; women who would give a banquet with a parricide's crowns. She took no thought for the morrow, and was careless of yesterday. The future for her meant after dinner, and eternity lay between the present moment and the end of the month, even when she had bills to fall due. Du Tillet was delighted to find a first lever to his hand, and began his campaign by obtaining a reduction from *La belle Hollandaise,* who agreed to solace Roguin's existence for thirty thousand francs instead of fifty thousand, a kind of service which sexagenarian passion rarely forgets.

At length, one night after deep potations, Roguin opened out his financial position to du Tillet in an after-supper confidence. His real estate was mortgaged to its full value under his wife's marriage settlement, and in his infatuation

he had appropriated moneys deposited with him by his clients; more than half the value of his practice had been embezzled in this way. When he had run through the rest, the unfortunate Roguin would blow his brains out, for he thought he should diminish the scandal of his failure by exciting the pity of the public. Du Tillet, listening, beheld success, rapid and assured, gleaming like a flash of lightning through the obscurity of drunkenness. He reassured Roguin, and repaid his confidence by persuading him to fire his pistols into the air.

"When a man of your calibre takes such risks upon himself," said he, "he ought not to flounder about like a fool; he should set to work boldly."

Du Tillet counseled Roguin to help himself to a large sum of money, and to intrust it to him (du Tillet) to speculate boldly with it on the Stock Exchange, or in some other enterprise among the hundreds that were being started at that speculative epoch. If the stroke was successful, the two of them should found a bank, speculate with the deposits, and with the profits the notary should satisfy his cravings. If the luck went against them, Roguin should go abroad, instead of killing himself, for his devoted du Tillet would be faithful to the last penny. It was a rope flung out to a drowning man, and Roguin did not see that the perfumer's salesman was fastening it round his neck.

Du Tillet, master of Roguin's secret, used it to establish his power over the wife, the husband, and the mistress. Mme. Roguin, to whom he gave warning of a disaster, which she was far from suspecting, accepted du Tillet's assiduities, and then it was that the latter left the perfumer's shop, feeling that his future was secure. It was not difficult to persuade the mistress to risk a sum of money that in case of need she might not be obliged to go on the street. The wife looked into her affairs, and accumulated a small amount of capital, which she handed over to the man in whom her husband placed confidence, for at the outset the notary put a hundred thousand francs into the hands of his accomplice. Brought

in this way into close contact with Mme. Roguin, du Tillet contrived to transform interest into affection, and to inspire a violent passion in that handsome woman. In his speculations on the Stock Exchange he naturally shared in the profits of his three associates, but this was not enough for him; he had the audacity to come to an understanding with an opponent, who refunded to him the amount of fictitious losses, for he played for his own hand as well as for his clients.

As soon as he had fifty thousand francs, he was sure of making a large fortune. He watched with the eagle's eye that was one of his characteristics, over the phases of political life in France; he speculated for a fall in the Funds during the campaign of France, and for a rise when the Bourbons came back.

Two months after the return of Louis XVIII., Mme. Roguin possessed two hundred thousand francs, and du Tillet a hundred thousand crowns. In the notary's eyes this young man was an angel; he had restored order in his affairs. But *La belle Hollandaise* fell a victim to a wasting complaint which nothing could cure, a virulent cancer called Maxime de Trailles, one of the late Emperor's pages. Du Tillet discovered the woman's real name from her signature to a document. It was Sarah Gobseck. Then he remembered that he had heard of a money-lender of the name of Gobseck; and, struck by the coincidence, paid a visit to that aged discounter of bills, and providence of young men with prospects, to find out how this female relative's credit stood with him. The bill-broking Brutus proved inexorable where his grand-niece was concerned, but du Tillet himself managed to find favor in his eyes by posing as Sarah's banker with capital to invest. The Norman and the money-lender found each other congenial.

Gobseck wanted a clever young fellow who could look after a bit of business abroad for him just then. The return of the Bourbons had taken a State auditor by surprise. To this financier, wishful to stand well at Court, it had occurred that he might buy up the debts contracted by the Princes in Ger-

many during the emigration. He offered the profits of the affair, which for him was purely a matter of policy, to any one who would advance the necessary money. Old Gobseck had no mind to disburse moneys over and above the market value of the debts, into which a shrewd representative must first examine. Money-lenders trust nobody; they must always have a guarantee; the occasion is omnipotent with them; they are ice when they have no need of a man, affable and obliging when he is likely to be useful. Du Tillet knew the immense part played, below the surface, in the Paris money market by Werbrust and Gigonnet, discount brokers of the Rue Saint-Denis and Rue Saint-Martin, and by Palma, a banker in the Faubourg Poissonnière, who was almost always associated with Gobseck. He therefore offered to pay down caution money, requiring on his own side a share in the profits of the transaction, and asking that these gentlemen should employ in the money-lending business the capital which he should deposit with them. In this way he secured supporters. Then he accompanied M. Clément Chardin des Lupeaulx on a trip to Germany during the Hundred Days, and came back with the Second Restoration, with some added knowledge that should lead to success rather than with actual wealth. He had had an initiation into the secrets of one of the cleverest schemers in Paris; he had won the goodwill of the man whom he had been set to watch; a dexterous juggler had laid bare for him the springs of political intrigue and the rules of the game.

Du Tillet's intelligence was of the order which understands at half a word; this journey formed him. On his return he found Mme. Roguin still faithful; but the poor notary was expecting Ferdinand with quite as much impatience as his wife. *La belle Hollandaise* had ruined him again!

Du Tillet, questioning *La belle Hollandaise,* could not elicit from her an account that represented all the money which she had squandered. And then it was that he discovered the secret so carefully kept from him—Sarah Gobseck's infatuation for Maxime de Trailles, known at the very outset

of his career of vice and debauchery for a political hanger-on of a kind indispensable to all good government, and for an insatiable gambler. After this discovery du Tillet understood old Gobseck's indifference to his grand-niece.

At this critical juncture, du Tillet the banker (for by this time he was a banker) strongly recommended Roguin to put by something for a rainy day; to engage some of his richest clients in a business speculation, and then to keep back considerable sums out of the money paid over to him, in case he should be compelled to become a bankrupt in the course of a second career of speculation. After various rises and falls in the price of stocks, which brought luck only to du Tillet and Mme. Roguin, the notary's hour struck. He was insolvent, and thereupon, in his extremity, his closest friend exploited him, and du Tillet discovered that speculation in building land in the neighborhood of the Madeleine. Naturally, one hundred thousand francs which Birotteau had deposited with Roguin until an investment should be found for them, were paid over to du Tillet, who, bent upon compassing the perfumer's ruin, made Roguin understand that he ran less risk by ensnaring his own intimate friends in his toils.

"A friend," said du Tillet, "will not go all lengths even in anger."

There are not many people at this present day who know how little land was worth per foot in the district of the Madeleine at this time; but the building lots must necessarily shortly be sold for more than their momentary depreciation, caused by the necessity of finding purchasers who would profit by the opportunity. Now it was du Tillet's idea to reap the benefit without keeping his money locked up in a lengthy speculation. In other words, he meant to kill the affair, so that a corpse which he knew how to resuscitate might be knocked down to him.

In such emergencies as this, the Gobsecks, Palmas, Werbrusts, and Gigonnets all lent each other a hand, but du Tillet did not know them well enough to ask them to help

him; and, besides, he meant to hide his action in the matter so thoroughly that, while he steered the whole business, he might receive all the profits and none of the disgrace of the robbery. So he saw the necessity of one of those animated lay figures termed *men of straw* in commercial phrase. The man who had once before acted the part of a stock-jobber for him seemed to be a suitable tool to his hand, and he infringed the Divine rights by creating a man. Of a former commercial traveler, without a farthing on this earth, with no ability, no capacity save for empty rambling talk on all sorts of subjects, and but just sufficient wit to suffer himself to be drilled in a part and to play it without compromising the piece, and yet endowed with the rarest sense of honor—that is to say, a faculty for silently accepting the dishonor of his principal—of him, du Tillet made a banker, the originator and promoter of commercial enterprises on the largest scale; him he metamorphosed into the head of the firm of Claparon.

Should the exigencies of du Tillet's affairs at any time demand a bankruptcy, it was to be Charles Claparon's fate to be delivered over to Jews and Pharisees, and Claparon knew it. Still, for the present, the scraps and pickings that fell to his share were an El Dorado for a poor devil who, when his chum du Tillet came across him, was sauntering along the Boulevards with no prospects beyond the two-franc piece in his pockets; so his friendship for and devotion to du Tillet, swelled by a gratitude that did not look to the future, and stimulated by the cravings of a dissolute and disreputable life, led him to say *Amen* to everything.

When he had once sold his honor, he saw that it was risked with so much prudence, that at length he came to have a sort of dog-like attachment for his old comrade du Tillet. Claparon was a very ugly performing poodle, but he was ready at any moment to make the leap of Curtius for his master.

In the present scheme Claparon was to represent one-half of the purchasers of the lots, as Birotteau represented the

other half. Then the bills which Claparon would receive from Birotteau should be discounted by some money-lender, whose name du Tillet would borrow; so that when Roguin absconded with the rest of the purchase-money, Birotteau would be left on the brink of ruin. Du Tillet meant to direct the action of the assignees; there should be a forced sale of the building land, and du Tillet meant to be the purchaser; he would buy it for about half its value, and pay for it with Roguin's money and the dividend of the bankruptcy; so under different names he was in possession of the money paid down by the perfumer and his creditor to boot.

It was a prospect of a goodly share of the spoils that led Roguin to meddle in this scheme; but he had practically surrendered himself at discretion to a man who could and did take the lion's part. It was impossible to bring du Tillet into a court of law, and the notary in a remote part of Switzerland, where he found beauties of a less expensive kind, was lucky to have a bone flung to him once a month or so.

The ugly scheme was no deliberate invention, no outcome of the broodings of a tragedian weaving a plot, but the result of circumstances. Hatred, unaccompanied by a desire for revenge, is as seed sown upon the granite rock: du Tillet swore to be revenged upon César Birotteau, and the prompting was one of the most natural things in the world; if it had been otherwise, there had been no quarrel between angels of darkness and the angels of light.

Du Tillet could not, without great inconvenience, murder the one man in Paris who knew that he had been guilty of petty theft; but he could sully his old master's name and crush him until his testimony was no longer admissible. For a long time past the thought of vengeance had been germinating in his mind; but it had come to nothing. The rush of life in Paris is so swift, and so full of stir, chance counts for so much in it, that even the most energetic haters do not look very far ahead; yet, on the other hand, if the constant ebb and flow is unfavorable to premeditated action, it affords

excellent opportunities for carrying out projects that lurk in politic brains, clever enough to lie in wait for the chances that come with the tide. Du Tillet had had a dim inkling of the possibility of ruining César from the moment when Roguin first opened out his case to him; and he had not miscalculated.

Roguin, meanwhile, on the point of leaving his idol, drained the rest of the philtre from the broken cup, going daily to the Champs-Élysées, and returning home in the small hours. There were grounds, therefore, for Mme. César's suspicious theories. When a man has made up his mind to play such a part as du Tillet had assigned to Roguin, he perforce acquires the talents of a great actor; he has the eyes of a lynx and the penetration of a seer; he finds ways of magnetizing his dupe, so the notary had seen Birotteau long before Birotteau set eyes on him; and when he saw that he was recognized, he held out a hand while he was still at some distance.

"I have just been making the will of a great person who has not a week to live," said he, with the most natural air in the world, "but they have treated me like a village doctor —sent a carriage to fetch me, and let me go home afoot."

A slight cloud of suspicion which had darkened the perfumer's brows cleared away at these words; but Roguin had noticed it, and took good care not to be the first to speak about the building land, for he meant to give his victim the finishing stroke.

"After a will come marriage-contracts," said Birotteau; "such is life. Ah! by the by, Roguin, old fellow, when do we make a match of it with the Madeleine, eh?" and he tapped the other on the chest. Among men, the best-conducted bourgeois will try to appear a bit of a rogue with the women.

"Well, it is to-day or never," returned the notary with a diplomatic look. "We are afraid that the affair will get noised abroad; already two of my richest clients want to go into the speculation, and are very keen about it. So you

can take it or leave it. After twelve o'clock this morning I shall draw up the deeds, and until one o'clock it is open to you to join us if you choose. Good-bye. Xandrot made a rough draft of the documents for me last night, and I am about to read them through this very minute."

"All right, the thing is settled, you have my word," cried Birotteau, hurrying after the notary, and striking hands upon it. "Take the hundred thousand francs that were to have been my daughter's portion."

"Good," said Roguin, as he walked away.

In the brief interval as Birotteau returned to young Popinot he felt a sensation of feverish heat run through him, his diaphragm contracted, sounds rang in his ears.

"What is the matter, sir?" asked the assistant, looking at his employer's pale face.

"Ah, my boy, I have just concluded a big piece of business with a single word. No one in such a position can help feeling some emotion. You know all about it, however; and besides, I brought you here so that we could talk comfortably where no one will listen to us. Your aunt is pinched; what did she lose her money in? Tell me about it."

"My uncle and aunt put their capital into M. Nucingen's bank, and were obliged to take over shares in the Worstchin mines in settlement of their claims; no dividends have been paid on them as yet, and at their time of life it is difficult to live on hope."

"Then how do they live?"

"They have been so good as to accept my salary."

"Good, Anselme, good," said the perfumer, looking up with a tear in his eyes; "you are worthy of the attachment I feel for you. And you shall be well rewarded for your application in my service."

As he spoke, the merchant grew greater in his own estimation as well as in Popinot's eyes; a sense of his adventitious superiority was artlessly revealed in his homely and paternal way of speaking.

"What! Can you have guessed my passion for——?"

"For whom?" asked the perfumer.

"For Mademoiselle Césarine."

"Boy!" cried Birotteau, "you are very bold. But keep your secret carefully; I promise to forget it, and you shall go out of the house to-morrow. I don't blame you; the devil no! In your place I should have done just the same. She is so pretty."

"Ah, sir!" cried the assistant, in such a perspiration that his shirt felt damp.

"This cannot be settled in a day, my boy. Césarine is her own mistress, and her mother has her ideas. So keep yourself to yourself, wipe your eyes, hold your heart well in hand, and we will say no more about it. I should not blush to have you for a son-in-law. As the nephew of M. Popinot, judge of a Tribunal of First Instance, and as the Ragons' nephew, you have as good a right to make your way as another, but there are *ifs* and *buts* and *ands!* What a devil of a notion you have sprung upon me in the middle of a talk about business! There, sit you down on that bench, and business first and love affairs after.—Now, Popinot, is there mettle in you?" said Birotteau, looking at his assistant. "Do you feel that you have courage enough to wrestle with those that are stronger than you? for a hand-to-hand fight, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"To keep up a long and dangerous combat?——"

"What is it?"

"To drive Macassar Oil from the field!" cried Birotteau, drawing himself up like one of Plutarch's heroes. "We must not undervalue the enemy; he is strong, well intrenched, and formidable. Macassar Oil has been well pushed. It is a clever idea, and the shape of the bottles is out of the common. I had thoughts of a triangular bottle for this plan of mine, but after mature reflection, I am inclined for little blown glass flasks covered with wicker work; they would look mysterious, and the public like anything that tickles their curiosity."

"It would cost a good deal," said Popinot. "Everything

ught to be on the cheapest possible footing, so as to allow a heavy discount to the trade."

"Right, my boy; those are sound principles of business. Bear in mind that Macassar Oil will show fight! 'Tis a specious thing; the name is attractive. It is put before the public as a foreign importation, and we, unluckily, are in our own country. Look here, Popinot, do you feel strong enough to do for Macassar? To begin with, you will oust it from the export trade; it seems that Macassar really does come from the Indies, so it is more natural to send French goods to the Indians than to ship them back the stuff that they are supposed to send to us. So there's the export trade for you! But it will have to be fought out abroad, and all over the country; and Macassar Oil has been so well advertised, that it is no use blinking the fact that it has a hold; it is pushed everywhere, and the public are familiar with it."

"I will do for it!" cried Popinot, with eyes on fire.

"And how?" returned Birotteau. "It is like the impetuosity of these young people! Just hear me out."

Anselme looked like a soldier presenting arms to a Marshal of France.

"I have invented an oil, Popinot, an oil which invigorates the scalp, stimulates the growth of the hair, and preserves its color—an oil for both sexes. The essence should have no less success than the Pâte and the Lotion, but I do not want to exploit the secret by myself; I am thinking of retiring from business. I want *you*, my boy, to bring out the *Comagen* —from the Latin word *coma*, which means hair (so M. Alibert, physician to the King, told me). In *Bérénice*, Racine's tragedy too, there is a king of Comagène, a lover of the beautiful queen who was so famous for her hair; no doubt it was out of compliment to her that he called his kingdom Comagène. How clever these great men of genius are! they descend to the smallest details."

Little Popinot listened to these incongruities, evidently meant for his benefit, who had had some education, and yet kept his countenance.

"Anselme," continued Birotteau, "I have cast my eyes on you as the founder of a wholesale druggist's business in the Rue des Lombards. I will be a sleeping-partner, and find you the capital to start it with. When we have begun with the Comagen, we will try essence of vanilla and essence of peppermint. In short, by degrees we will go into the drug trade and revolutionize it, by selling articles in a concentrated form instead of the raw products. Are you satisfied, ambitious young man?"

Anselme was so overcome that he could not reply, but his tear-filled eyes made answer for him. It seemed to him that this offer was the outcome of a fatherly indulgence which said, "Deserve Césarine by earning wealth and respect."

"I too will succeed, sir," he said at last, taking Birotteau's emotion for astonishment.

"Just what I was at your age," cried the perfumer; "those were just the very words I used! Whether you have my daughter or no, at any rate you will have a fortune. Well, my boy, what has come to you?"

"Let me hope that by gaining the one I may win the other."

"I do not forbid you to hope, my dear fellow," said Birotteau, touched by Anselme's tone.

"Very well, sir; may I begin to look out at once for a shop, so as to begin as soon as possible?"

"Yes, my boy. To-morrow we will shut ourselves up in the factory. You might look in at Livingston's on your way to the Rue des Lombards, and see if my hydraulic press will be in working order by to-morrow. To-night, at dinner-time, we will go to see that great man, kind M. Vauquelin, and ask him about this. He has been investigating the composition of hair quite lately, trying to find out its coloring matter, and where it comes from, and what hair is made of.—It all lies in that, Popinot. You shall know my secret, and all that remains to do is to exploit it intelligently.—Look in at Pieri Bérard's before you go round to Livingston.—My boy, M. Vauquelin's disinterestedness is one of the great

troubles of my life. You cannot get him to accept anything. Luckily, I found out from Chiffreville that he wanted a Madonna at Dresden, engraved by one Müller, and after two years of inquiry for it in Germany, Bérard has found a copy at last—a proof before letters on India paper; it cost fifteen hundred francs, my boy. And now to-day our benefactor shall see it in the ante-chamber when he comes to the door with us; framed, of course, you will make sure of that. So in that way we shall recall ourselves to his memory, my wife and I; for as to gratitude, we have put his name in our prayers every day these sixteen years. For my part, I shall never forget him; but, you know, Popinot, these men of science are so deep in their work, that they forget everything, wife and children, and those they have done a good turn to. As for the like of us, our little intelligence permits us to have warm hearts at any rate. That is some comfort for not being a great man. These gentlemen at the Institute are all brain, as you will see; you will never come across one of them in a church. There is M. Vauquelin, always in his study when he isn't in his laboratory; I like to believe though that he thinks of God while he analyzes His works.—This is the understanding: I am to find the capital, I will put you in possession of my secret, and we will divide the profits equally, so there will be no need to draw up a deed. Good success to us both! We will tune our pipes. Off with you, my boy; I have affairs of my own to see after. One moment, Popinot; in three weeks' time I am going to give a grand ball, have a suit of clothes made, and come to it like a merchant already in a good way of business——"

This last piece of kindness touched Popinot so much that he grasped César's large hand in his and kissed it. The good man's confidence had flattered the lover, and a man in love is capable of anything.

"Poor fellow!" said Birotteau, as he watched his assistant hurrying across the gardens of the Tuileries, "if Césarine only cared about him! But he limps, his hair is the color of a basin, and girls are such queer things! I can scarcely be-

lieve that Césarine . . . And then her mother would like to see her a notary's wife. Alexandre Crottat would make her a rich woman; money makes anything endurable, while there is no happiness that will stand the test of poverty. After all, I have made up my mind that my girl shall be mistress of herself, so that she stops short of folly."

Birotteau's next-door neighbor, Cayron by name, was a dealer in umbrellas, sunshades, and walking sticks. He came from Languedoc, his business was not doing well, and César had helped him several times. Cayron asked nothing better than to contract his limits, and to effect a proportionate saving in house rent by giving up two first-floor rooms to the wealthy perfumer.

"Well, neighbor," said Birotteau familiarly as he entered the umbrella shop, "my wife consents to the enlargement of our place. If you like, we will go round and see M. Molineux at eleven o'clock."

"My dear M. Birotteau," returned he of the umbrella shop, "I have never asked anything for the concession on my part, but you know that a good man of business ought to turn everything to money."

"The deuce!" cried the perfumer; "I have no money to throw away, and I am waiting to know if my architect thinks the thing feasible. 'Before you settle anything,' so he said, 'we must know whether the floors are on a level; and then we must have M. Molineux's leave to make an opening in the wall, and is it a party wall?' And after that I shall have to turn the staircase in my house, so as to alter the landing and have the whole place level from end to end. There will be a lot of expense, and I don't want to ruin myself."

"Ah, sir," cried the Languedocien, "when *you* are ruined, heaven and earth will come together and have a family."

Birotteau stroked his chin, raised himself on tiptoe, and came down again.

"Besides," Cayron went on, "I only ask you to take this paper of me——" and he held out a little statement for five thousand francs and sixteen bills.

"Ah!" said the perfumer, turning them over, "all for small amounts, at two months and three months——"

"Take them of me, and don't charge me more than six per cent," pleaded the umbrella dealer humbly.

"Am I a Jew?" asked the perfumer reproachfully.

"Goodness, sir, I took them to du Tillet that used to be your assistant, and he would not have them at any price; he wanted to know how much I would consent to lose, no doubt."

"I know none of these signatures," said the perfumer.

"Well, we have funny names in the cane and umbrella trade; they are hawkers."

"Well, well; I do not say that I will take the lot, but I might manage to take all at the shortest dates."

"Don't leave me to run after those horse-leeches that drain us of the best part of the profits, for a thousand francs at four months; take the lot, sir! I do so little discounting, that no one gives me credit; that is the death of us poor retailers in a small way."

"Well, well, I will take your little bills. Célestin shall settle it with you. Be ready at eleven.—Here comes my architect, M. Grindot," added the perfumer, as he saw the young man whom he had met by appointment at M. de la Billardière's house on the previous evening.—"Unlike most men of talent, you are punctual, sir," said César, in his most genteel manner.

"If punctuality—in the phrase of a king who was a clever man as well as a great statesman—is the courtesy of kings, it is no less the fortune of architects. Time—time is money; most of all for you artists. Architecture combines all the other arts, I permit myself to say. We will not go through the shop," he added, as he showed the way to the sham carriage entrance.

Four years ago M. Grindot had taken the *Grand Prix d' Architecture;* and now, he had just returned from a three years' sojourn in Rome at the expense of the State. While he was in Italy the young artist had thought of his art; in

Paris he turned his attention to money-making. Governments alone can give the necessary millions to erect public buildings and monuments to an architect's enduring fame; and it is so natural, when fresh from Rome, to take one's self for a Fontaine or a Percier, that every ambitious young architect has a leaning towards Ministerialism; so the subsidized Liberal, metamorphosed into a Royalist, sought to find patrons in power; and when a *Grand Prix* conducts himself after this fashion, his comrades call him a sycophant.

Two courses lay open to the youthful architect—he might serve the perfumer or make as much as he could out of him. But Birotteau the deputy-mayor; Birotteau, the future possessor of half that building estate near the Madeleine, where a quarter full of handsome houses was sure to be built sooner or later, was a man worth humoring, so Grindot sacrificed present gain to future opportunities. Patiently he listened to the plans, ideas, and vain repetitions of this shopkeeping Philistine, the artist's butt and laughing-stock, and the particular object of his scorn, and followed the perfumer about his house, bowing respectfully to his ideas. When Birotteau had said all that he had to say, the young architect tried to give a summary of his own views.

"You have three windows looking out upon the street in your own house," he said, "as well as the window that is wasted on the stairs and required for the landing. To these four windows you add two on the same floor in the next house, by turning the staircase so that you can walk on level from one end to the other on the side nearest the street."

"You have understood me exactly," said the amazed perfumer.

"To carry out your plan, we shall have to light the new staircase from above, and contrive a porter's lodge in the plinth."

"Plinth?"

"Yes; the part of the wall under the——"

"I see, sir."

"As to your rooms, and their arrangement, and decoration,

give me *carte-blanche*. I should like to make them worthy——"

"Worthy! You have said the very word, sir."

"How long can you give me to carry out this scheme of decoration?"

"Twenty days."

"What are you prepared to put down for the workmen?"

"Well, what are the repairs likely to mount up to?"

"An architect can estimate the cost of a new building almost to a centime," said the other; "but as I have not undertaken a *bourgeois* job as yet (pardon me, sir, the word slipped out), I ought to tell you beforehand that it is impossible for me to give estimates for alterations and repairs. In a week's time I might be able to make a rough guess. Put your confidence in me; you shall have a charming staircase lighted from above, and a pretty vestibule, and in the plinth——"

"The plinth again!"

"Do not be anxious. I will find room for a little porter's lodge. The alteration and decoration of your rooms will be a labor of love. Yes, sir, I am thinking of art and not of making money. Above all things, if I am to succeed, I must be talked about, must I not? So, in my opinion, the best way is not to haggle with tradesmen, but to obtain a good effect cheaply."

"With such ideas, young man," Birotteau said patronizingly, "you will succeed."

"So you will yourself arrange with the bricklayers, painters, locksmiths, carpenters, and cabinet-makers; and I, for my part, undertake to check their accounts. You will simply agree to pay me a fee of two thousand francs; it will be money well laid out. Put the whole place into my hands by twelve o'clock to-morrow, and tell me whom you mean to employ."

"What is it likely to cost at first sight?" asked Birotteau.

"Ten to twelve thousand francs," said Grindot, "without counting the furniture; for, of course, you will refurnish the rooms. Will you give me the address of your carpet manufacturer? I ought to come to an understanding with him about the colors, so as to have a harmonious unity."

"M. Braschon in the Rue Saint-Antoine has my order," said the perfumer, assuming a ducal air.

The architect made a note of the address on one of those little tablets which are unmistakably a pretty woman's gift.

"Well," said Birotteau, "I leave it all to you, sir. Still, wait until I have arranged to take over the lease of the two rooms next door, and obtained permission to make an opening through the wall."

"Send me a note this evening," said the architect. "I must spend the night in drawing plans. We architects would rather work for a city merchant than for the King of Prussia, that is to say, as far as our own taste is concerned. In any case, I will set about taking measurements, the height of the rooms, the dimensions of the door and window embrasures, and the size of the windows."

"It must be finished by the date I have given, or it is no good."

"It certainly must," returned the architect. "The men shall work day and night, and we will employ processes for drying the paint; but do not let the builders swindle you, make them quote beforehand, and have the agreement in writing."

"Paris is the only place in the world where one can make such strokes of the wand," said Birotteau, indulging in a flourish worthy of some Asiatic potentate in the *Arabian Nights*.—"Do me the honor of coming to my ball, sir. All men of talent do not feel the contempt for trade which some heap upon it; and I expect you will meet one scientific man of the highest rank—M. Vauquelin of the Institute!—besides M. de la Billardière, M. le Comte de Fontaine, M. Lebas a judge, and President of the Tribunal of Commerce; and several magistrates, M. le Comte de Granville of the Court Royal, and M. Popinot of the Court of First Instance, M. Camusot of the Tribunal of Commerce, and his father-in-law M. Cardot. . . . Perhaps, even M. le Duc de Lenoncourt, first Gentleman of the Bedchamber. It is a gathering of my friends, quite as much in honor of—er—the liberation

of the soil—as to celebrate my—promotion to the Order of the Legion of Honor."

Grindot's gesture was peculiar.

"Possibly—I have deserved this—signal mark of royal—favor by the discharge of my functions at the Consular Tribunal, and by fighting for the Bourbons on the steps of Saint-Roch's Church on the 13th Vendémiaire, when I was wounded by Napoleon. These claims to——"

Constance, in morning dress, came out of Césarine's bedroom, where she had been dressing; her first glance stopped her husband's fervid eloquence; he cast about for some everyday phrase which should modestly convey the tidings of the glory awaiting him on the morrow.

"Here, *mimi,* this is M. *de* Grindot, a distinguished young man of great talent.—This gentleman is the architect whom M. de la Billardière recommended; he will superintend our little alterations here."

The perfumer placed himself so that his wife could not see him, and put his finger on his lips as he uttered the word *little.* The architect understood.

"Constance, this gentleman will take the dimensions of the rooms.—Let him do it, dear," said Birotteau, and he whisked out into the street.

"Will it cost a great deal?" Constance asked the architect.

"No, madame; six thousand francs, roughly speaking——"

"Roughly speaking!" cried Mme. Birotteau. "Sir, I beg of you not to begin without an estimate, and to do nothing until a contract has been signed. I know the way of those gentlemen the builders—six thousand means twenty thousand. We are not in a position to squander money. I beg of you, sir, although my husband is certainly master in his own house, to leave him time to think this over."

"Monsieur told me, madame, that he must have the rooms finished in twenty days; if we make a delay, you may incur the expense without obtaining the result."

"There is expense and expense," said the fair mistress of the *Queen of Roses.*

"Eh! madame; is it so very glorious, do you think, for an architect who would like to erect public monuments to superintend alterations in a private house? I only undertook the little commission to oblige M. de la Billardière, and if you are alarmed——"

He made as if he would withdraw.

"Well, well, sir," said Constance, going back to her room. Once there she hid her head on her daughter's shoulder.—"My child," she cried, "your father is ruining himself! He has engaged an architect who wears moustaches and a *royale* on his chin, and talks about erecting public monuments! He will fling the house out of the windows to build us a Louvre. César is always in a hurry when there is anything crazy to be done; he only told me about the plan last night, and he is setting about it this morning."

"Bah! mamma, never mind papa; Providence has always taken care of you," said Césarine, putting her arms about her mother. Then she went to the piano, to show the architect that a perfumer's daughter was no stranger to the fine arts.

When the architect came into the room, he was surprised by Césarine's beauty, and stood almost dumfounded. For the artist saw before him Césarine just come from her little room, in her loose morning-gown, fresh and blooming with the freshness and the bloom of eighteen years, blue-eyed, and slender, and fair-haired. Youth gave the elasticity (so rare in Paris) which lends firmness to the most delicate tissues; youth tinted the blue network of veins throbbing beneath the transparent skin with the color adored by painters. For though she lived in the relaxing atmosphere of a Parisian shop, where the fresh air can scarcely penetrate, and the sunlight seldom comes, the outdoor life of Roman Trasteverine could not have been a more successful beautifier than Césarine's manner of living. Her thick hair grew erect like her father's, and being dressed high, afforded a view of a well-set neck among a shower of curls—the elaborate coiffure of the damsels of the counter, in whom a desire to shine inspires a more than English attention to trifling details in matters of the toilette.

Césarine's beauty was neither that of an English court lady nor of a French duchess, but the plump and auburn-haired comeliness of Rubens' Flemish women. She had inherited her father's turned-up nose, but its delicacy of outline gave a sprightly charm to a face, of the essentially French type so well rendered by Largillière. The rich silken tissue of the skin indicated the abundant vitality of girlhood. Her mother's broad brow was lighted by a girlish serenity, untroubled by care, and there was a tender grace in the expression of the blue liquid eyes of the happy-hearted, fair-haired maid. If happiness had taken from her face the romantic interest which painters inevitably give to their compositions by an expression somewhat too pensive, the vague, wistful instincts of the young girl who has never left her mother's wing made an approach to this ideal. With all her apparent slenderness, she was strongly made. Her feet indicated her father's peasant origin, a racial defect, like the redness of her hands—the sign-manual of a purely bourgeois descent. Sooner or later she was sure to grow stout. Occasionally young and fashionable women had come within her ken; and in course of time she had acquired from them the instinct of dress, certain ways of carrying her head, and manners of speaking and moving, thus copied, which turned the heads of the assistants and other young men; in their eyes she seemed to have a distinguished air.

Popinot had vowed to himself that no woman but Césarine should be his wife. This mobile blonde, whom a glance seemed to read, who seemed ready to melt into tears at a harsh word, was the one woman in whose presence he could feel conscious of masculine superiority. The charming girl inspired love, without leaving time to consider whether or no she had sufficient *ésprit* to ensure that the love should be lasting; but what need is there for what we in Paris call *ésprit*, in a class where the essential elements of happiness are good sense and virtue?

In character, Césarine was a second edition of her mother, slightly improved by an education which had taught her

superfluous accomplishments. She was fond of music, and had made a crayon drawing of the *Madonna of the Chair;* she perused the works of Mesdames Cottin and Riccoboni, and the writings of Fénelon, Racine, and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. She never appeared at her mother's side at the cash-desk save for a few moments before dinner, or when, on rare occasions, she took her place. Her father and mother, like all self-made people, who hasten to plant the seeds of ingratitude in their children by putting the younger generation on a higher level, delighted to make an idol of Césarine, who, happily, possessed the good qualities of her class, and did not take advantage of their weakness.

Mme. Birotteau followed the architect's movements with earnest, anxious eyes; looking on in consternation, calling her daughter's attention to the strange gyrations of the footrule, as Grindot took his measurements after the manner of architects and builders. For her, each one of those strokes of the wand seemed to lay the place under an evil enchantment, and boded ill to the house; she would fain have had the walls less lofty and the rooms smaller, and dared not put any questions to the young man as to the results of this sorcery.

"Be easy, madame," he said, with a smile; "I shall not carry anything away."

Césarine could not help laughing.

"Sir," pleaded Constance, who did not so much as notice the architect's quip, "aim at economy; some day we may be able to make you a return——"

Before César went to M. Molineux, the landlord of the next house, he asked Roguin for the transfer of the lease which Alexandre Crottat was to have drawn up. As he came away from the notary's house, he saw du Tillet at Roguin's study window. Although the *liaison* between his sometime assistant and Mme. Roguin was a sufficient explanation of du Tillet's presence in the house at a time when the negotiations for the building land were impending, Birotteau, trustful though he was, felt uncomfortable. Du Tillet's animated face suggested that a discussion was going on.

"Suppose that he should be in the business?" he asked himself, in an access of his commercial prudence.

The suspicion flashed like lightning across his mind. He turned again and saw Mme. Roguin at the window; and then the banker's presence no longer looked so suspicious.

"Still, how if Constance was right?" he asked himself. "How stupid I am to pay any attention to a woman's notions! However, I will talk it over this morning with our uncle. It is only a step from the Cour Batave, where M. Molineux lives, to the Rue des Bourdonnais."

A suspicious onlooker, a man of business with some experience of rogues, would have been warned; but Birotteau's previous career, together with his lack of mental grasp (for he was but little fitted for retracing a chain of inductions, a process by which an able man arrives at a cause), all led to his ruin. He found the umbrella dealer dressed in his best, and was starting away with him to the landlord, when Virginie, the servant, caught her master by the arm.

"The mistress hopes you will not go out again, sir——"

"Come!" cried Birotteau; "some more women's notions!"

"Without taking your cup of coffee. It is ready for you."

"Oh! all right. I have so many things in my head, neighbor," said Birotteau, turning to Cayron, "that I do not listen to my stomach. Be so good as to walk on; we shall meet each other at M. Molineux's door, unless you go up and explain the matter to him first. We should save time that way."

M. Molineux was an eccentric person of independent means, a specimen of a kind of humanity which you will no more find out of Paris than you will find Iceland moss growing anywhere out of Iceland. The comparison is but so much the more apt, for that the man in question belonged to that doubtful borderland between the animal and vegetable kingdoms which awaits the Mercier, who shall classify the various *cryptogamia* which strike root, thrive, or die among the plaster walls of the strange unwholesome old houses affected by the species.

This particular human plant was an umbellifer, to judge

by the blue tubular cap which crowned a stem sheathed in a pair of greenish-colored breeches, and terminated by bulbous roots enveloped in list slippers. At first sight the plant seems harmless and colorless enough; there is certainly nothing to suggest poison in its appearance. In this strange freak of nature you would have recognized the typical shareholder, who believes in all the news which the daily press baptizes with printer's ink, whose "Look at the paper" is a final appeal to authority; this (you would have thought) was the bourgeois, essentially a lover of order, always (in theory) in rebellion against the powers that be, to whom in practice he punctually yields obedience; a ferocious creature, take him singly, who grows tame in a crowd of his like. The man who is obdurate as a bailiff where his dues are concerned, gives fresh groundsel to his birds, and saves the fish-bones for the cat; he looks up in the middle of making out a receipt to whistle to the canary; he is suspicious as a turnkey, but will hurry to invest his money in some doubtful undertaking, and then try to recover his losses by the most sordid meanness. The noxious qualities of this hybrid growth are only discovered by use; its nauseous bitterness requires the coction of some piece of business wherein its interests are mingled with those of men.

Like all Parisians, Molineux felt a need to make his power felt. He craved that particular privilege of a sovereignty more or less exercised by every creature, down to the very porter, over a larger or smaller number of victims—a woman, a child, a clerk, or lodger, a horse, a dog, or monkey—that part of domination which consists in handing on to another the mortifications received by an aspirant to higher spheres. The tiresome little old person in question, having neither wife, nor child, nor niece, nor nephew, treated his charwoman so harshly that she gave him no opportunity of venting his spleen upon her, and avoided all collision with him by a rigorous discharge of her duties.

So his appetite for domestic tyranny being thus balked, he was fain to find other ways of satisfying it. He had made

a patient study of the law of landlord and tenant, and of the legal aspects of the party-wall; he had fathomed the mysteries of jurisprudence with regard to house-property in Paris, and was learned in its infinitely minute intricacies with regard to boundaries and abutments, easements, rates, charges, regulations for the cleansing of the street, hangings for Fête-Dieu processions, waste-pipes, lights, projections over the public way, and the near proximity of insanitary dwellings. All his mental and physical energies, all his intelligence was devoted to maintaining his authority as a landlord with a high hand; he had made a hobby of his occupation, and the hobby was becoming a mania.

He loved to protect citizens against encroachments on their rights, but opportunities occurred so seldom that his thwarted passion expended itself upon his tenants. A tenant became his enemy, his inferior, his subject, his vassal. He felt that their homage was a due, and regarded those who passed him without a salutation on the stairs as boors. He made out his receipts himself, and sent them at noon on the quarter day; and those who were behindhand received a summons by a certain hour. Then followed a distraint and costs, and all the cavalry of the law came into the field with the celerity of "the machine," as the headsman calls his instrument of execution. Molineux gave no grace and no delay; his heart was indurated on the side of rents.

"I will lend you the money if you want it," he would say to a solvent tenant, "but pay me my rent; any getting behindhand with the rent means a loss of interest for which the law provides no remedy."

After a prolonged study of the skittish humors of successive tenants who conformed to no standard and, like successive dynasties, nor more nor less, invariably overturned the institutions of their predecessors, Molineux had promulgated a charter, which he observed religiously. By virtue of it, the good man never did any repairs; none of his chimneys smoked, his staircases were always in order, his ceilings white, his cornices above reproach, his floors held securely to the

joists, and there was no fault to find with the paint. All the locks had been put in within the last three years, every window pane was whole, and as for cracks in the walls, they did not exist; he could see no broken tiles in the floors till the tenants were leaving the house. He usually appeared upon the scene to receive the incoming tenants with a locksmith and a painter and glazier, very handy fellows, he said. The tenant was doubtless at liberty to make improvements; but if the thriftless creature redecorated his rooms, old Molineux set his wits to work, and pondered night and day how to dislodge him and let the newly papered and painted abode to another comer. He set his snares, bided his time, and began the whole series of his unhallowed devices. There was no subtlety in the regulations of Paris with regard to leases that he did not know. He indited polite and amiable communications to his victims; but beneath the manner, as beneath the harmless and obliging expression of the pettifogging scribbler himself, lurked the spirit of a Shylock.

He must always be paid six months in advance, to be deducted from the last half-year's rent, subject to a host of thorny conditions of his own invention. He assured himself that the value of the tenant's furniture was sufficient to cover the rent, and reconnoitered every new tenant like a detective when he came in. There were some occupations which he did not like, and the least sound of a hammer frightened him. When the time came for handing over a lease, he kept it back for a week, conning it over for fear it should contain what he denominated *notary's et ceteras.*

Apart from his character of landlord, Jean-Baptiste Molineux was apparently good-natured and obliging. He could play a game of boston without complaining of being badly seconded by his partner; his stock subjects for conversation were of the ordinary bourgeois kind, and he found the same things laughable—the arbitrary acts of bakers (the rascals), who give short weights, which are winked at by the police, the heroic seventeen deputies of the Left. He read the Curé Meslier's *Bon Sens,* yet went to mass, halting

between Deism and Christianity; but he subscribed nothing for sacramental bread, under the plea that you must resist the encroachments of the priesthood. The indefatigable redresser of grievances would write to this effect to the newspapers, though the newspapers neither inserted his letters nor replied to them. Molineux was, in short, in many respects the ordinary estimable citizen who burns a yule log at Christmas, draws for king on Twelfth Night, plays tricks on the 1st of April, makes the round of the boulevards when the weather is fine, goes to watch the skating; and on days when there are to be fireworks in the Place Louis XV., will take his place there at two o'clock in the afternoon with a piece of bread in his pocket, so as to be "in the front row."

The Cour Batave, where the little old man lived, is a result of one of those freaks of the speculative builder which cannot be explained after they have taken substantial form. It is a cloister-like building with its freestone arcading, its covered galleries surrounding the court with a fountain in the middle—a thirsty fountain with its lion jaws agape, not to supply, but to ask for water of every passer-by. Possibly it was intended for a sort of Palais-Royal to adorn the Faubourg Saint-Denis. There is a little light and stir of life during the day in the unwholesome pile shut in on all four sides by tall houses; it lies in the centre of a labyrinth of dank alleys, where the rheumatism lurks for the hurrying foot-passenger, a maze of dark narrow passages which converge here and connect the Quartier des Halles and the Quartier Saint-Martin by the famous Rue Quincampoix; but at night there is no spot in Paris more deserted, and these little slums might be called the catacombs of commerce. It is the sink of several industries; and if there are few natives of Batavia proper, there are plenty of small tradesmen.

Naturally, all the suites of rooms in this merchant's palace have but one outlook—into the central courtyard—and for this and other reasons the rents asked are of the lowest. M. Molineux inhabited one of the angles of the building. Con-

siderations of health had prompted the choice of a sixth-floor lodging; for fresh air was only to be had at a height of seventy feet from the ground. From the leads, where the worthy owner of house-property was wont to take exercise, he enjoyed a charming view of the windmills of Montmartre. He grew flowers up there too, in defiance of police regulations against these hanging-gardens of the modern Babylon. His sixth floor establishment consisted of four rooms, without counting the water-closets on the floor above, a valuable property to which his claim was incontestable; he had the key, he had established them. On a first entrance, an indecent bareness at once revealed the miserly nature of the man. Half-a-dozen straw-bottomed chairs stood in the lobby; there was a glazed earthenware stove; and on the walls, covered with a bottle-green paper, hung four prints bought at sales. In the dining-room you beheld a couple of sideboards, two cages full of birds, a table covered with oilcloth, a weather-glass, mahogany chairs with horsehair cushions, and through a French window a view of the aforesaid hanging-gardens. Short, antiquated green silk curtains adorned the sitting-room, and the white painted wooden furniture was upholstered in green Utrecht velvet. As for the furniture of the old bachelor's room, it was of the period of Louis XV.; disfigured by prolonged wear, and so dirty that a woman in a white gown would have shrunk from contact with it. The chimney-piece boasted a clock; the dial, between two columns, served as a pediment beneath a statuette of Pallas brandishing a lance—a fabulous personage of antiquity. The tiled floor was so littered over with plates full of scraps for the cats, that it was scarcely possible to move about without setting a foot in one of them. Above the rosewood chest of drawers hung a pastel—Molineux in his youth. Add a few books, tables covered with shabby green card-board boxes, a case full of the stuffed forms of some departed canaries on a console table, and, to complete the list, a bed so chilly-looking that it might have been a rebuke to a Carmelite.

César Birotteau was charmed with Molineux's exquisite

politeness. He found the latter in his gray flannel dressing-gown, keeping an eye on the milk set on a little cast-iron plate warmer, in a corner of the hearth, while he poured the contents of a brown earthen pipkin, in which he had been boiling coffee grounds, into his *cafétière* by spoonfuls at a time. The umbrella dealer had opened the door, lest his landlord should be disturbed in this occupation; but Molineux, holding mayors and deputy-mayors ("our municipal officers," as he called them) in great veneration, rose at first sight of the magistrate, and stood cap in hand until the great Birotteau should be seated.

"No, sir . . . Yes, sir . . . Ah, sir, if I had known that I was to have the honor of housing a member of the municipal government of Paris amid my humble Penates, pray believe that I should have made it my business to repair to your house; although I am your landlord, or—on the point —of—being——"

Here Birotteau by a gesture entreated him to put on his cap.

"I shall do nothing of the kind; I shall remain bareheaded until you are seated, and have put on your hat if you have a cold. My room is rather chilly; my narrow means do not permit—God bless you, Mr. Deputy-mayor!"

Birotteau had sneezed while fumbling for his papers. He held them out, not without remarking that to save any delay he had had them made out at his own expense by M. Roguin his notary.

"I do not call M. Roguin's knowledge in question; 'tis an old name, well known in the Parisian notariat; but I have my little ways of doing things, and I look after my affairs myself, a hobby excusable enough; and my notary is——"

"But this is such a simple matter," said the perfumer, accustomed to prompt decisions on the part of buyers and sellers.

"*Simple!*" echoed Molineux. "Nothing is simple where house property is concerned. Ah! you are not a landlord, sir; so much the happier you! If you but knew the lengths

to which a tenant will push ingratitude, and what precautions we have to take! Now just listen to this, sir: I have a tenant——" and for fifteen minutes Molineux held forth, relating how that M. Gendrin, a draughtsman, had eluded the vigilance of the caretaker in the Rue Saint-Honoré. M. Gendrin had perpetrated scandals worthy of a Marat, obscene drawings! and the police tolerated it, nay, they were made with the connivance of the police! Then this Gendrin, an artist of thoroughly immoral character, had gone back to the house with loose women, and made it impossible to go up and down the stairs, a prank worthy of a man who drew caricatures to ridicule the Government. And why all these misdeeds? . . . Because he was asked to pay his rent on the 15th! Gendrin and Molineux were about to go to law about it; for while the artist did not pay, he insisted on occupying the empty rooms. Molineux received anonymous letters—from Gendrin no doubt—threatening to murder him some night in the alleys about the Cour Batave.

"Things have arrived at such a pitch, sir," he went on, "that the Prefect of Police, to whom in confidence I related my difficulty (at the same time, I took the opportunity of saying a word or two touching the alterations that ought to be made in the provisions of the law for such cases), gave me an authorization to carry firearms in self-defence."

The little old man got up to look for his pistols.

"Here they are, sir!" cried he.

"But you have nothing of that kind to fear from me, sir," said Birotteau, glancing at Cayron with a smile that plainly expressed his pity for such a man.

Molineux caught the glance, and was shocked to see such a look on the countenance of a "municipal officer," whose duty it was to see to the safety of those in his district. He could have forgiven it in anybody else, but in Birotteau it was unpardonable.

"Sir," Molineux answered dryly, "one of the most highly respected judges in the Consular Tribune, a deputy-mayor, and an honorable merchant, would not condescend to such

baseness, for baseness it is! But in this particular case you want the consent of your landlord, M. le Comte de Granville, before you make a hole in the wall, and stipulations must be made in the agreement touching the restoration of the wall on the expiration of the lease. As a matter of fact, too, the rent is a great deal lower than it will be; rents will go up all about the Place Vendôme; they are going up already! The Rue Castiglione is about to be built. I am binding myself down—I am binding—myself——"

"Let us have done with it," said Birotteau. "What do you want? I have had enough experience of business to guess that your reasonings can be silenced by the great argument—money! Well, how much do you want?"

"Nothing but what is fair, sir. How long has your lease to run?"

"Seven years," answered Birotteau.

"What may not my first floor be worth in seven years' time?" cried Molineux. "What will two furnished rooms let for over in your quarter? More than two hundred francs a month very likely! I am binding myself; binding myself down by a lease. So we will set down the rent at fifteen hundred francs. At that figure I will consent to receive you as a tenant for the two rooms instead of M. Cayron here," giving the dealer a sly wink, "and let you have them on lease for seven consecutive years. The opening in the wall you will make at your own charges, subject to your bringing to me proof that M. le Comte de Granville sanctions it and waives all his rights in the matter. Whatever happens in consequence of the small opening, the responsibility will rest upon you; but you shall be in nowise bound to reinstate the wall so far as I am concerned; you shall pay me down five hundred francs now instead; we never can tell what may happen; and I don't want to run about after anybody to put up my wall again for me."

"The conditions seem to me scarcely fair," put in Birotteau.

"Then you must pay me down seven hundred and fifty

francs *hic et nunc,* to be carried forward till the last six months of possession; the lease will be a sufficient discharge. Oh! I will take bills of exchange for value received in rent, at any date you please, so that I have my guarantee. I am a plain-dealing man, and go straight to the point in business. We will stipulate that you shall wall up the door on my staircase, where you have no right of way . . . at your own expense . . . in brick and mortar. Reassure yourself, I shall not call upon you to make it good when the lease expires; I shall regard the five hundred francs as an indemnity. You will always find me reasonable, sir."

"We in business are not so particular," said the perfumer; "if we had all these formalities, we should do no business at all."

"Oh, in business, that is quite another thing, especially in the perfumery line, where everything slips off and on like a glove," said the little old man, with a sour smile. "But with house property in Paris, sir, you cannot be too particular. Why, I had a tenant in the Rue Montorgueil——"

"I should be very sorry to delay your breakfast, sir," said Birotteau; "here are the deeds, set them right, all that you ask me is agreed to; let us sign the documents to-morrow, and give our promises by word of mouth to-day, for to-morrow my architect must be put in possession of the place."

Molineux looked again at the umbrella-dealer. "There is part of the term expired, sir; M. Cayron has no mind to pay for it; we will add the amount to the little bills, so that the agreement will run from January to January. That will be more business-like."

"So be it," said Birotteau.

"There is the halfpenny in the shilling for the porter——"

"Why, you are not allowing me to use the staircase and the doorway; it is not right that——"

"Oh! but you are a tenant!" cried little Molineux in peremptory tones, up in arms for the principle involved. "You must pay door and window taxes and your share of the rates. If once we clearly understand each other, sir, there

will be no difficulties hereafter.—Is your business rapidly increasing, sir; are you doing well?"

"Yes," said Birotteau, "but that is not my reason. I am inviting a few of my friends, partly to celebrate the evacuation of the foreign troops, partly on the occasion of my own promotion to the Legion of Honor——"

"Aha!" cried Molineux, "a well-deserved honor."

"Yes," said Birotteau. "It may be that I have shown myself not unworthy of this signal mark of royal favor by acting in my capacity at the Consular Tribunal, and by fighting for the Bourbons on the steps of Saint-Roch, on the 13th of Vendémiaire, where I was wounded by Napoleon; these claims——"

"Equal those of our heroes in the late army. The ribbon is red, because it has been dyed in blood shed for France."

At these words, a quotation from the *Constitutionnel,* Birotteau could not resist the impulse to invite little Molineux, who grew quite incoherent in his thanks, and was almost ready to forgive the slight which had been put upon him. The old man went as far as the stairhead with his new tenant, overwhelming him with civilities.

As soon as they were outside in the Cour Batave, Birotteau looked at Cayron with an amused expression.

"I did not think that there was such a weak-minded creature in existence," he said; "idiot" had been on the tip of his tongue, but he suppressed it in time.

"Ah, sir!" said Cayron, "everybody is not as clever as you are."

Birotteau might be excused for thinking himself a clever man compared with Molineux; the umbrella-dealer's reply drew a pleasant smile from him; he took leave of his companion with a regal air.

"Here am I at the Market," he said to himself; "let us arrange about the hazel-nuts."

After an hour spent in making inquiries, the market-woman referred Birotteau to the Rue des Lombards, the headquarters of the trade in nuts for confectionery, and

there his friends the Matifats informed him that the only wholesale dealer in hazel-nuts was one Mme. Angélique Madou, resident in the Rue Perrin-Gasselin; and that this was the one house in the trade for genuine Provençal filberts and white Alpine hazel-nuts.

The Rue Perrin-Gasselin lies in a quadrangle bounded by the Quay, the Rue Saint-Denis, the Rue de la Ferronnerie, and the Rue de la Monnaie, a labyrinth of slums which are, as it were, the entrails of Paris. Here countless numbers of heterogeneous and nondescript industries are carried on; evil-smelling trades, and the manufacture of the daintiest finery, herrings and lawn, silk and honey, butter and tulle, jostle each other in its squalid precincts. Here are the head-quarters of those multitudinous small trades which Paris no more suspects in its midst than a man surmises the functions performed by the pancreas in the human economy. In this congested district, in which one Bidault of the Rue Grenétat (otherwise known as Gigonnet the pawnbroker) played the part of leech, the whole stock of goods sold in the Great Market is kept. The ancient mews are warehouses where tons of oil are stored; the old coach-houses hold thousands of pairs of cotton stockings.

Mme. Madou, sometime a fish-wife, had gone into the "dry-fruit line" some ten years before this present year of grace, on her entrance into a partnership with the late owner of the business, who had an old-established connection among the ladies of the Great Market. Her beauty, of a vigorous and provocative order, had disappeared in excessive stoutness. She lived on the ground floor of a yellow dilapidated house, held together by iron cramps at every story. The departed dealer in dry fruit had succeeded in ridding himself of competitors, and had secured a monopoly of the trade; so that in spite of some slight defects of education, his successor could continue in the same groove, and came and went in her warehouses, old out-buildings, stables, and workshops, where she waged war against insect life with some success.

Mme. Angélique Madou dispensed with counting-house,

safe, and book-keeping (for she could neither read nor write), and answered a letter by blows of the fist, for she looked upon it as an insult. In other respects she was a good-natured soul, with a high-colored countenance, and a bandana handkerchief tied about her head beneath her cap, and a trumpet voice which won the respect of the carmen who brought goods to the Rue Perrin-Gasselin, and whose "rows" with her usually ended in a bottle of *petit blanc*. She could not well have any trouble with the growers who supplied her, for she always paid cash on delivery, the only way of carrying on such a business as hers, and Mother Madou went into the country to see them in the summer-time.

Birotteau found this shrewish saleswoman among her sacks of hazel-nuts, chestnuts, and walnuts.

"Good day, my dear lady," said Birotteau flippantly.

"*You dear!*" returned she. "So you have pleasant recollections of your dealings with me, have you? Have we met each other at Court?"

"I am a perfumer, and what is more, deputy-mayor of the Second Arrondissement of Paris, and I have a right to expect a different tone from you."

"I marry when I have a mind," said the virago; "I am no customer at the mayor's office, and don't trouble deputy-mayors much. And as for my customers, they adore me, and I talk to 'em as I please. If they don't like it, they may take themselves somewhere else."

"See what comes of a monopoly," muttered Birotteau.

"Popole? that's my godson; he has been up to some foolery perhaps; have you come for him, your worship?" she asked, in milder tones.

"No. I have the honor to inform you that I come to you as a customer."

"All right. What is your name, my lad? I haven't seen you here before."

"If that is the way you talk, you ought to sell your nuts cheap," said Birotteau, and he mentioned his name and designation.

"Oh! you are the famous Birotteau with the handsome wife. Well, and what weight do you want of these little dears of hazel-nuts, honey?"

"Six thousand pounds weight."

"It is as much as I have," said the saleswoman, with a voice like a cracked flute. "You are not in the do-nothing line, marrying the girls, and making scent for them. Lord, bless you! you do a trade, you do! Sorry I have so little for you! You will be a fine customer, and your name will be written on the heart of the woman that I love best in the world——"

"Who may that be?"

"Who but dear Madame Madou."

"What do you want for the nuts?"

"Twenty-five francs the hundred-weight to you, mister, if you take the lot."

"Twenty-five francs," said Birotteau. "That is fifteen hundred francs! And I shall very likely take a hundred thousand pounds weight in a year!"

"But just look at the quality; no husks!" cried she, plunging a red arm into a sack of filberts. "Sound kernels, my dear sir. Just think, now, the grocers sell their mixed dessert fruits at twenty-four sous the pound, and in every four pounds they put more than a pound of hazel-nuts. Am I to lose money on the goods to please you? You are a nice man, but I don't care enough about you yet to do that. As you are taking such a quantity, we might let you have them at twenty francs, for it won't do to send away a deputy-mayor; it would bring bad luck to the young couples! A good article; just feel the weight of them! They wouldn't go fifty to the pound! Sound nuts they are, not a maggot among them!"

"Well, send six thousand pounds weight early to-morrow morning to my factory in the Rue Faubourg-du-Temple, for two thousand francs at ninety days."

"They shall be punctual as a bride at a wedding. Well, good-bye, M. le Maire; we part good friends. But if it is all the same to you," she added, following Birotteau into the

court, "I would rather have a bill at forty days, for I have let you have them too cheap, and I can't afford to lose the interest on the money too. For all his sentimental ways, old Gigonnet sucks the life out of us, as a spider sucks a fly."

"Very well, yes, fifty days. But I'll have the nuts by weight, so as not to lose on the hollow ones. They must be weighed or I'll have nothing to do with them."

"Oh, the fox; he knows that dodge, does he?" said Mme. Madou; "you can't catch him napping. Those beggars in the Rue des Lombards put him up to that! Those great wolves yonder are all in a league to devour us poor lambs."

The lamb was five feet high and three feet round; she had not a vestige of a waist, and looked like a post in a striped cotton gown.

As he went along the Rue Saint-Honoré, the perfumer, lost in his schemes, meditated on his duel with Macassar Oil. He designed the labels, decided on the shape of the bottles, the quality of the corks, the color of the placards. And people say that there is no poetry in business! Newton did not make more calculations over the discovery of the famous binomial theorem than Birotteau made for the "Comagen Essence" (for it was an essence now; the words oil and essence possessed no definite meaning for him, and he went from the one to the other). All these combinations were seething in his head, and he mistook the ferment of an empty brain for the germination of an idea. So absorbed was he in his meditations, that he went past the Rue des Bourdonnais, and bethinking himself of his uncle, was obliged to retrace his steps.

Claude-Joseph Pillerault, formerly a retail ironmonger at the sign of the *Golden Bell,* was one of those human beings whose exterior is the outward and visible expression of a beautiful nature; and heart and brain, language and thought, his manner and the clothes that he wore, were all in harmony. He was the only relation that Mme. Birotteau had in the world, and upon her and on Césarine Pillerault had centered all his affections; for in the course of his business career

he had lost his wife and his son, and a boy whom he had adopted, the son of his cook.

These cruel bereavements had given to the good man's thoughts a cast of Christian stoicism, a lofty doctrine which was the informing spirit of his life, and shed the radiance of a winter sunset over his last years, a glow that brings no warmth. There was a tinge of asceticism about the thin, worn face, where sallow and swarthy tones were harmoniously blended; you saw in it a striking resemblance to typical presentments of Time; but the every-day cares of a retail business had touched this face, there was less of the monumental quality, less of the grimness insisted upon by painters, sculptors, and designers of bronze figures for clocks.

Pillerault was of middle height, and thick-set rather than stout. Nature had fashioned him for hard work and a long life; he was strongly built, as his square shoulders indicated; a man of phlegmatic temper, whose feelings, though he could feel, did not lie on the surface. His quiet manner and resolute face indicated that he was little given to the expression of his emotions; but reserved and undemonstrative though he was, there were depths of tenderness in Pillerault's nature. The principal characteristic of the hazel eyes, with dark specks in them, was their unvarying clearness. There were deep furrows in a forehead sallowed by time, narrow, contracted, and stern, and covered with gray hair, cut so short that it looked like felt. Prudence, not avarice, was expressed in the lines of the thin lips. The brightness of the eyes told of a temperate life; and, indeed, sincerity, a sense of duty, and a real humility glorified his features and set off his face, as health does.

For sixty years he had led a hard and dreary existence, a constant struggle for a livelihood. It was the same story as César's own, with César's luck omitted. Pillerault had remained an assistant till he was thirty years old; he had embarked his capital in business at an age when César was investing his savings in *rentes;* then the law of the maximum had hit him hard, and his pickaxes and spades had been

requisitioned. His taciturn wisdom, his foresight, and logical clear-headedness had had their effect on his "ways of doing business." His bargains were concluded as a rule by word of mouth and difficulties seldom arose. Like most meditative people, he was an observer; he said little, and studied those who talked; often he had declined good bargains of which his neighbors had availed themselves, and subsequently repented, and vowed that Pillerault could smell out a rogue. He preferred sure gains, if of the smallest, to bold strokes of business involving heavy sums.

His stock of hardware consisted of grates, gridirons, cast-iron fire-dogs, boilers, and copper caldrons, hoes, and such agricultural implements as laborers use, somewhat unremunerative branches of a business that involves continual drudgery. Hardware is ponderous, awkward to handle, and difficult to store, and the profits are not heavy in proportion; so Pillerault had nailed up many a case, sent off many packages, and unloaded many vans. Never had a competence been more honorably earned, more thoroughly deserved, more to the credit of the man who had made it. He had never asked too much, had never run after business. Towards the end of the time, you might have seen him smoking his pipe in the doorway and watching his assistants at work. In 1814, when he retired, his actual capital at first consisted of seventy thousand francs, which he invested in Government stock, that brought him in five thousand and some odd hundred francs a year, with a further forty thousand francs due in five years' time, when the assistant to whom he had sold the business was to pay for it. On this amount, meanwhile, no interest was paid. For thirty years he had annually made seven per cent on a turn-over of a hundred thousand francs, and had lived on half his income. Such was his balance-sheet.

His neighbors, but little jealous of this by no means brilliant success, extolled his wisdom without comprehending it.

At the corner of the Rue de la Monnaie and the Rue Saint-Honoré stands the Café David, where a few retired trades-

men such as Pillerault, congregate of an evening to take their coffee. At one time, Pillerault's adoption of his cook's son had occasioned a few jokes among its frequenters, such jokes as are addressed to a man looked up to among his fellows, for the ironmonger received a respect for which he had not sought; his own self-respect sufficed him. So when Pillerault lost the poor young fellow, there were more than two hundred people at the funeral who followed his adopted child to the grave. He behaved heroically in those days, making no parade of his grief, bearing it as a brave man bears sorrow. This increased the sympathy felt in the quarter for the "good man," as they called him, and the accent in which the words were spoken gave the words a wider and ennobled meaning when they were applied to Pillerault.

Claude Pillerault had become so accustomed to the sober even tenor of his life, that when he retired from business and entered upon the time of leisure, which hangs so heavily on many a Parisian tradesman's hands, he could not unbend and divert himself with the amusements of an idle life; he made no change in his housekeeping; and his old age was enlivened by his political opinions, which, let us admit it at once, were those of the extreme Left.

Pillerault belonged to the artisan class, which the Revolution had brought into co-operation with the small shopkeepers. The one blot on his character was the importance which he attached to the victory of his principles; he dwelt fondly on his rights, on liberty, on the great results of the Revolution; he firmly believed that his political freedom and existence were being undermined by the Jesuits, whose underhand power the Liberals discovered, and threatened by the ideas with which the *Constitutionnel* credited Monsieur the King's brother. He was, however, consistent in his life and in his ideas; there was nothing narrow in his political views; he never abused his adversaries, he held courtiers in suspicion, and believed in Republican virtues. He imagined that Manuel was guiltless of any excesses, that General Foy was a

great man, and Casimir Périer without ambition; to his thinking, Lafayette was a political prophet, Courier a good man. In short, he beheld noble chimerical visions.

The good man was domestic in his habits; he made part of the family circle in which his niece lived—the Ragons, Judge Popinot, Joseph Lebas, and the Matifats. Fifteen hundred francs a year supplied his needs; the rest of his income was spent in charitable deeds and in presents to his grand-niece; four times a year he gave a dinner to his friends at Roland's in the Rue du Hasard, and took them afterwards to the play. He played the part of the old bachelor friend on whom married women draw bills at sight for their fancies; for a country excursion, a party for the Opéra or the Montagnes-Beaujon; and Pillerault would be very happy at such times in the pleasure he was giving, and felt the gladness in other hearts.

If Molineux's character was written at large in his queer furniture, Pillerault's pure heart and simple life were no less revealed by his surroundings. His abode consisted of a lobby, a sitting-room, and bedroom. But for the difference in size, it might have been a Carthusian's cell. The lobby, floored with red tiles, which were beeswaxed, boasted but one window, hung with dimity curtains edged with scarlet; mahogany chairs with red leather cushions, and studded with brass nails, stood against the wall, which was covered with an olive-green paper, and adorned with pictures—a *Declaration of Independence,* a portrait of Bonaparte as First Consul, and a *Battle of Austerlitz.* The furniture of the sitting-room, doubtless left to the upholsterer, was yellow, and covered with a flowered pattern; there was a carpet on the floor; the bronze ornaments on the chimney-piece were not gilded. There was a painted fire-screen before the grate; a vase of artificial flowers under a glass shade stood on a console, and a liqueur stand on a round table covered with a cloth. It was evident from the unused look of the room that it was a concession to convention on the part of the retired ironmonger, who rarely received visitors.

His own room was as bare as that of a monk or an old soldier, the two men who make the truest estimate of life. In the alcove a holy-water stoup caught the eye, a profoundly touching confession of faith in a Republican stoic.

An old woman came in to do the work of the establishment; but so great was Pillerault's reverence for womankind, that he would not allow her to clean his shoes, and made an arrangement with a shoeblack.

His costume was plain, and never varied. He always wore a coat and breeches of blue cloth, a cotton waistcoat, a white cravat, and very low walking-shoes; and on high days and holidays a coat with metal buttons. He rose, breakfasted, went out, dined, and returned home when the evening was over with the strictest regularity, for a methodical life conduces to health and length of days. César, the Ragons, and the Abbé Loraux always avoided the subject of politics; those of his own circle knew better than to court attack by trying to convert him. Like his nephew and the Ragons, he put great faith in Roguin; for him a notary of Paris was always a being to be venerated, and probity incarnate. In the matter of the building land, Pillerault had examined it so thoroughly, that the remembrance of his investigations had given César moral support in the combat with his wife's forebodings.

As César climbed the seventy-two steps of the stairs which led to the brown doorway of his uncle's rooms, he thought within himself that the old man must be very hale to go up and down them daily without a murmur. He found the coat and breeches hanging on a peg outside, and Mme Vaillant busy rubbing and brushing them; while the philosopher himself, in his gray flannel dressing-gown, was breakfasting by the fireside, and conning the reports of parliamentary debates in the *Constitutionnel* or the *Journal du Commerce*.

"The affair is settled, uncle," said César; "they are just about to draft the documents; but if you have any doubts or regret about it, there is still time to cry off."

"Why should I cry off? It is a good piece of business, but it takes some time to realize, like everything that is safe. My fifty thousand francs are lying at the bank; the last instalment of five thousand francs for my business was paid in yesterday. As for the Ragons, they are putting all that they have into it."

"Why, how do they live?"

"Never mind; they live, at all events."

"I understand you, uncle," said Birotteau, deeply touched, and he grasped the austere old man's hands tightly in his.

"What are you going to do about this business?" Pillerault asked abruptly.

"I shall take three-eighths; you and the Ragons will take an eighth between you; I shall credit you with the amount in my books until they decide the question of the deeds."

"Good! Are you so very rich, my boy, that you pay down three hundred thousand francs? It looks to me as though you were risking a good deal of money outside your business; won't the business suffer? After all, it is your own affair. If you are pulled up, here are the funds at ninety; I could sell out two thousand francs in consols. Take care, though, my boy; if you come to me, you will be laying hands on your girl's fortune."

"Uncle, you say the kindest of things as if they were a matter of course; it goes to my heart to hear you."

"General Foy touched me after another fashion just now! There, at all events, it is settled. The building lots won't fly away; we shall have them for half their value; and even if we should have to wait six years, there will still be something in the way of interest; timber-yards would pay rent, so we cannot lose. There is only one thing, and that is impossible—Roguin will not run away with our capital——"

"But that is what my wife said last night; she is afraid——"

"That Roguin will run off with our money," said Pillerault, laughing; "and why?"

"Well, she says she doesn't like the cut of his features; and, like all men who cannot have women, he is frantic for——"

An incredulous smile stole over Pillerault's face; he tore a leaf out of a little book, filled in the amount, and signed his name.

"Here, this is an order on the bank for a hundred thousand francs, for Ragon's share and mine. Those poor people, though, to make up the money, sold out their fifteen shares in the Wortschin mines to your worthless rogue of a du Tillet. Good people in sore straits; it goes to one's heart to see it. And such good people they are, such noble people, the flower of the old-fashioned bourgeoisie, in fact! Their brother Popinot, the judge, knows nothing about it; they are hiding their affairs from him, lest they should hinder him from giving free course to his benevolence. People who have worked as I did for thirty years——"

"God grant that the Comagen Oil succeeds!" cried Birotteau, "and I shall be doubly pleased. Good-day, uncle; you are coming to dine with us on Sunday with the Ragons and Roguin, and M. Claparon is coming, for we are all going to sign the papers the day after to-morrow; to-morrow will be Friday, and I don't want to do bus——"

"Do you really believe in those superstitions?"

"I shall never believe that the day when the Son of God was put to death by men can be a lucky day, uncle. Why? —people stop all business even on the 21st of January."

"Good-bye till Sunday," said Pillerault abruptly.

"If it weren't for his political opinions," said Birotteau to himself, as he went downstairs again, "I do not know where they would find his equal here below. What are politics to him? He would get on very nicely without thinking of them at all. His infatuation shows that no one is perfect.—Three o'clock already!" said César, as he entered his shop.

"Are you going to take these bills, sir?" asked Célestin, holding out the umbrella-dealer's collection of bills.

"Yes, at six per cent, no commission.—Wife, put out all my things ready for me; I am going to call on M. Vauquelin, you know why. Above all things, a white cravat."

Birotteau gave some orders to his assistants; he did not see Popinot, guessed that his future partner had gone to dress for the visit, and went up at once to his own room, where the Dresden Madonna met his eyes in a magnificent frame, according to his orders.

"Well, it looks fine, doesn't it?"

"Why, papa, say it is beautiful, or people will laugh at you."

"Here is a girl for you that scolds her father! . . . Well, for my own part, I like *Hero and Leander* quite as much. The *Madonna* is a religious subject, which could be hung up in an oratory; but *Hero and Leander!* Ah! I will buy it, for the flask of oil suggested some ideas to me."

"But I don't understand, papa."

"Virginie, call a cab!" shouted César, in a voice that rang through the house. He had finished shaving, and the shy Anselme Popinot appeared, dragging his feet, for he thought of Césarine. He had not discovered as yet that he was not lame in the eyes of his lady-love, a sweet proof of love, which only those to whom fate has given some bodily deformity can receive.

"The press will be in working order to-morrow, sir," he said.

"Very well. What is the matter, Popinot?" asked César, seeing Anselme's flushed face.

"I am so glad, sir; I have found a place, a front and back shop, and a kitchen, and the rooms above, and a storeroom, all for twelve hundred francs a year, in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants."

"We must have an eighteen years' lease of it," said Birotteau. "But let us go to M. Vauquelin, and we can talk on the way," and César and Popinot drove away under the eyes of the assistants, who were at a loss what to think of such magnificent attire, and so unusual a portent as a cab, igno-

rant as they were of the mighty matters that occupied the owner of the *Queen of Roses*.

"So we shall soon know the truth about the hazel-nuts!" said the perfumer.

"Hazel-nuts?" queried Popinot.

"You have my secret, Popinot," said the perfumer; "I let slip the word 'hazel-nuts,' and that tells everything. Hazel-nut oil is the only oil which produces any effect on the hair; no other house has thought of it. When I saw the print of *Hero and Leander*, I said to myself, 'If the ancients put so much oil on their heads, there must have been some reason for it,' for the ancients are the ancients! In spite of modern pretensions, I am of Boileau's opinion about the ancients. From that I came to the idea of hazel-nuts, thanks to young Bianchon, the medical student, your relative; he told me that the students at the École put hazel-nut oil on their moustaches and whiskers to make them grow. All we want now is the illustrious M. Vauquelin's approval. Enlightened by him, we shall not deceive the public. Only just now I was over in the Market buying the raw material of a saleswoman there; and in another moment I shall be in the presence of one of the greatest scientific men in France for the quintessence of the matter. There's sense in proverbs—extremes meet. Trade is the intermediary between vegetable products and science, you see, my boy! Angélique Madou collects the material, M. Vauquelin distils it, and we sell an essence. Hazel-nuts are worth five sous the pound, M. Vauquelin will increase their value a hundred-fold, and we shall perhaps do a service to humanity; for if vanity is a plague of man, a good cosmetic is a benefit."

The devout admiration with which Popinot listened to the father of his Césarine stimulated Birotteau's eloquence; he indulged in the crudest rhetorical display that a philistine's brain can devise.

"Be reverent, Anselme," he said, as they reached the street in which Vauquelin lived; "we are about to enter

the sanctuary of science. Put the *Madonna* in evidence, but without making a parade of it, on a chair in the dining-room. If only I can manage to say what I want to say without making a muddle of it!" cried Birotteau artlessly. "Popinot, that man produces a chemical effect on me, the sound of his voice makes me quite hot inside, and even gives me a slight colic. He is my benefactor, Anselme, and in a few minutes he will be your benefactor too."

Popinot turned cold at the words, set down his feet as if he were treading on eggs, and looked uneasily round the room.

M. Vauquelin was in his study when Birotteau was announced. The man of science knew that the perfumer was a deputy-mayor and in high favor; he received his visitor.

"So you do not forget me now that you are so high up in the world," he said; "well, between a chemist and a perfumer there is but a hand's-breadth."

"Alas! there is a great distance between your genius and a plain man like me, sir; and as for what you call 'being high up in the world,' it is all owing to you, and I shall never forget it in this world or the next."

"Oh! in the next we shall all be equal they say, cobblers and kings."

"That is to say, those kings and cobblers who have lived piously," remarked Birotteau.

"Is this your son?" asked Vauquelin, looking at little Popinot, who was beyond expression amazed to find nothing extraordinary in the study. He had expected to see prodigious marvels, giant engines, vivified substances, and metals flying about.

"No, sir; but he is a young man in whom I am very much interested, and he has come to entreat your goodness, which is equal to your talent, and is it not infinite?" remarked Birotteau diplomatically. "We have come, after an interval of sixteen years, to consult you a second time on a matter of importance, concerning which I am as ignorant as a perfumer."

"Let us hear about it. What is it?"

"I know that the subject of hair occupies your nights, and that you are devoting yourself to the analysis of the substance! While you have been thinking for glory, I have been thinking too for trade."

"Dear M. Birotteau, what do you want of me—an analysis of hair?"

He took up a loose sheet.

"I am about to read a paper before the Académie des Sciences," he went on. "Hair is composed of a somewhat large proportion of mucus, a little colorless oil, a larger proportion of dark-greenish oil, and iron; I find a certain amount of oxide of manganese, and of phosphate of lime, and traces of carbonate of lime, and silica; sulphur enters largely into its composition. The proportions in which these different substances are present vary, and so cause the different colorings of hair. Red hair, for example, on analysis yields much more of the dark green oil than the other kinds give."

César and Popinot opened their eyes ludicrously wide.

"Nine things," cried Birotteau. "What, are there metals and oils in hair? It takes the word of a man like you, whom I venerate, to make me believe it. How extraordinary! . . . God is great, M. Vauquelin."

"Hair is produced by a follicular organ," the great chemist continued; "a follicle is a sort of bag open at both ends; at the one end it is connected with nerves and blood-vessels, and the hair issues from the other. According to some of our learned associates, one of whom is M. de Blainville, the hair is dead matter expelled from the sac or secreting gland, which is full of a pulpy tissue."

"It is like perspiration in sticks, as you might say," cried Popinot, for which the perfumer promptly kicked his shins.

Vauquelin smiled at Popinot's notion. On this, "He has capacity, hasn't he?" said César, looking at Popinot. "But if hair is dead, to begin with, sir, you can't possibly restore it,

and it is all over with us! the prospectus is nonsense! You don't know how funny the public is; you can't go and tell people——"

"That there is a rubbish heap on their heads," said Popinot, trying to make Vauquelin laugh again.

"An aërial catacomb," returned the chemist, keeping up the joke.

"And the nuts that are bought!" cried Birotteau, with a lively sense of the pecuniary loss. "But why do they sell——?"

"Reassure yourself," said Vauquelin, smiling. "I see; some secret for preventing the hair from falling out or turning gray is the matter in question. Listen; here are my conclusions after all my researches."

Popinot pricked up his ears at this like a startled leveret.

"The blanching of the fibres, dead or alive, is, in my opinion, produced by an interruption of the secretion of the coloring matter; this theory would explain the fact that some fur-bearing animals in cold climates turn white or some lighter color at the beginning of winter."

"Hm! Popinot."

"It is evident," Vauquelin continued, "that the change of color is due to sudden change in the temperature of the circumambient air——"

"Circumambient, Popinot—mind that! mind that!" cried César.

"Yes," said Vauquelin, "to alternations of cold and heat, or to interior phenomena, which produce the same effect. So, in all probability, headaches and other local affections dissipate the fluid or derange the secretions. The inside of the head is the doctor's province. As for the outside, put on your cosmetics by all means."

"Well, sir," said Birotteau, "now I can breathe again after what you say. I thought of selling the oil of hazel-nuts, remembering the use the ancients made of oil for their hair; and the ancients are the ancients, I am of Boileau's opinion. Why did wrestlers oil themselves——?"

"Olive-oil would do quite as well as oil of hazel-nuts," said Vauquelin, who had paid no attention to Birotteau's remarks. "Any oil will do to protect the hair bulbs from outside influences injurious to the substances which it contains in process of formation; in course of deposit, we chemists would say. Perhaps you are right; the essential oil of hazel-nuts is an irritant, so Dupuytren once told me. I will try to find out the difference between walnut and beech-nut oils, colza, olive, and so forth."

"Then I am not mistaken," Birotteau exclaimed triumphantly, "and a great man bears me out in my opinion. Macassar is done for! Macassar, sir, is a cosmetic they give you, that is, sell you, and sell very dear, to make your hair grow."

"My dear M. Birotteau," said Vauquelin, "there are not two ounces of oil of Macassar in Europe. Oil of Macassar produces not the slightest effect on hair. The Malays will pay its weight in gold for it, because of its supposed preservative action on the hair, not knowing that whale oil is quite as good. No power chemical or divine——"

"Oh! divine—do not say that, M. Vauquelin."

"Why, my dear sir, God's first law is conformity with Himself; without unity there is no power——"

"Oh, looked at in that way——"

"No power whatever can make the hair grow on a bald head, and you cannot dye white or red hair without danger; but you will do no harm, and there will be no fraud in extolling your oil, and I think that those who use it might preserve their hair."

"Do you think that the Royal Academy of Science would approve it?"

"Oh! it is no discovery," said M. Vauquelin. "And besides, quacks have taken the name of the Academy in vain so often, that it would not help you at all. My conscience will not allow me to look on oil of hazel-nuts as a prodigy."

"What would be the best way of extracting it, by pressure or by decoction?" asked Birotteau.

"You will obtain the most oil by pressure between two hot

plates; but if the plates are cold, it will be of better quality. It ought to be applied to the skin itself, and not rubbed into the hair," continued Vauquelin good-naturedly, "or the effect will be lost."

"Mind you remember this, Popinot," said Birotteau, as his face flushed up with enthusiasm.—"You see in him, sir, a young man who will reckon this day among the great days of his life. He knew and revered you before he had seen you. Ah! we often talk of you at home; a name that is always in the heart comes often to the lips. We pray every day for you, my wife and daughter and I, as we ought to do for our benefactor."

"It is too much for so little," said Vauquelin, embarrassed by the perfumer's voluble gratitude.

"Tut, tut, tut!" said Birotteau. "You cannot hinder us from loving you, you who will accept nothing from me. You are like the sun; you shed light around you, and those on whom it shines can do nothing for you in return."

The man of science rose, smiling, to his feet; Birotteau and Anselme Popinot rose also.

"Look round, Anselme; take a good look at this study. If you will allow him, sir? Your time is so valuable, perhaps he will never come here again."

"Well, are you satisfied with your business?" asked Vauquelin, turning to Birotteau; "for, after all, we are both of us men of business——"

"Pretty well, sir," said Birotteau, going towards the dining-room, whither Vauquelin followed him; "but it will take a great deal of capital to start this oil under the name of Comagen Essence——"

"'Essence' and 'Comagen' are two words that clash. Call your cosmetic Birotteau's Oil; or if you have no mind to blaze your name abroad, take another——Why, there is the Dresden Madonna. . . . Ah! M. Birotteau, you mean us to fall out at parting."

"M. Vauquelin," said the perfumer, taking both the chemist's hands in his, "the scarce print has no value save for the

persistent efforts which I have made to find it; all Germany has been ransacked for a proof before letters on India paper; I knew you wished to have it, you were too busy to procure it yourself, so I have taken it upon myself to be your agent. Please accept, not a paltry print, but the earnest efforts, the care, and pains which prove a boundless devotion. I should have been glad if you had wanted some substances that could only be found in the depths of an abyss, that I might come to tell you, 'Here they are!' We have so many chances to be forgotten, let me put myself, my wife, and daughter, and the son-in-law whom I shall have one day, all before your eyes; and say to yourself when you see the Madonna, 'There are honest folk who think of me.'"

"I accept it," said Vauquelin.

Popinot and Birotteau wiped their eyes, so much moved were they by the kind tone in which the chemist spoke.

"Will you carry your kindness yet further?" asked the perfumer.

"What is it?" asked Vauquelin.

"I am inviting a few of my friends—(here he raised himself on tiptoe, but his face assumed a humble expression)—partly to celebrate the liberation of the soil, and partly on the occasion of my own promotion to the Legion of Honor."

"Aha!" said Vauquelin in astonishment.

"It may be that I have shown myself worthy of this signal mark of royal favor, by discharging my functions at the Consular Tribunal, and by fighting for the Bourbons on the steps of Saint-Roch's Church on the 13th of Vendémiaire, when I was wounded by Napoleon. . . . My wife is giving a ball on Sunday in twenty days' time; will you come to it, sir? Do us the honor of dining with us on that day; and for my own part, it will be as if they had given me the Cross twice. I will write to you in good time."

"Very well, yes," said Vauquelin.

"My heart is swelling with pleasure," cried the perfumer when they were in the street. "He will come to my house! I am afraid that I have forgotten what he said about hair; do you remember it, Popinot?"

"Yes, sir, and in twenty years' time I shall still remember it."

"A great man, that he is! What insight and what penetration!" exclaimed Birotteau. "He went straight to the point, he read our thoughts at once, and showed us how to make a clean sweep of Macassar Oil. Ah! nothing can make hair grow, Macassar, so that is a lie! Popinot, there is a fortune within our grasp. So let us be at the factory by seven o'clock to-morrow morning, the nuts will come in, and we will make the oil. There is no use in his saying that any oil will do; it would be all over with us if the public knew that. If there were not a little hazel-nut oil and scent in this composition of ours, what excuse should we have for selling it at three or four francs for as many ounces?"

"And you are to be decorated, sir!" said Popinot. "What glory for——"

"For commerce, isn't it, my boy?"

César Birotteau, sure of a fortune, looked so triumphant, that the assistants noticed his expression, and made signs to each other; for the appearance of a cab, and the fact that their employer and his cashier had changed their clothes, had given rise to the wildest imaginings. The very evident satisfaction of the pair, revealed by the diplomatic glances exchanged between them, and the hopeful eyes that Popinot turned once or twice on Césarine, announced that some important event was imminent, and confirmed the assistants' suspicions. The smallest chance events in their busy and almost monastic lives were as interesting to them as to any prisoner in solitary confinement. Mme. César's face (for she responded doubtfully to the Olympian looks her husband turned on her) portended some new development in the business, for at any other time Mme. César would have been serenely content,—Mme. César, who was so blithe over a good day, and to-day the takings had amounted to the extraordinary sum of six thousand francs; some old outstanding accounts had been paid.

The dining-room and the kitchen were both on the mezza-

nine floor, where César and Constance had lived during the first years of their married life. This dining-room, where their honeymoon had been spent, looked like a little drawing-room. The kitchen windows looked out into a little yard; a passage separated the two rooms, and gave access to the staircase, contrived in a corner of the back-shop.

Raguet the errand boy looked after the shop while they sat at dinner; but when dessert appeared, the assistants went downstairs again, and left César and his wife and daughter to finish their meal by the fireside. This tradition had been handed down from the days of the Ragons, who had kept up all the old-fashioned customs and usages in full vigor, and set the same enormous distance between themselves and the assistants that formerly existed between masters and apprentices. Césarine or Constance would then prepare the cup of coffee, which the perfumer took in a low chair by the fire. It was the hour when César told his wife all the small news of the day; he would tell her anything that he had seen in Paris, or what they were doing in the Faubourg du Temple, and about the difficulties that arose there.

"This is certainly one of the most memorable days in our lives, wife!" he began, when the assistants had gone downstairs. "The hazel-nuts have been bought, the hydraulic press will be ready for work to-morrow, the matter of the building lands has been concluded. And, while I think of it, just put away this order on the bank," he went on, handing over to her Pillerault's draft. "The redecoration of the rooms, our new rooms, has been settled.—Dear me! I saw a very queer man to-day in the Cour Batave!"

And he told the women about M. Molineux.

"I see," his wife broke in, in the middle of a tirade, "that you will have to pay two hundred thousand francs!"

"True, my wife," said the perfumer, with mock humility. "Good Lord! and how are we to pay it? for the building lands near the Madeleine, that will be the finest quarter in Paris some day, must be taken as worth nothing."

"Some day, César."

"Dear, dear!"—he continued his joke—"my three-eighths will only be worth a million in six years' time. And how shall we pay two hundred thousand francs?" asked César, making as though he were aghast. "Well, we will pay it with this," and he drew from his pocket one of Mme. Madou's hazel-nuts, which he had carefully kept.

He held it up between his thumb and finger. Constance said nothing; but Césarine, whose curiosity was tickled, brought her father his cup of coffee with a "Come, now, papa, are you joking?"

The perfumer, like his assistants, had noticed the glances Popinot had given Césarine during dinner; he meant to clear up his suspicions.

"Well, little girl, this hazel-nut is to work a revolution in the house. There will be one less under our roof after to-night."

Césarine looked straight at her father, as who should say, "What is that to me?"

"Popinot is going away."

Although César was a poor observer, although his remark had been meant to prepare the way for the announcement of the new firm of A. Popinot and Company, as well as for a trap for his daughter, his father's tenderness told him the secret of the vague emotions which sprang up in the girl's heart, and blossomed in red upon her cheek and brow, brightening her eyes before they fell. César thought at once that some word had been exchanged between Césarine and Popinot. Nothing of the kind had happened; the boy and girl understood each other, after the fashion of shy young lovers, without a word.

There are moralists who hold that love is the most involuntary, the most disinterested and least calculating of all passions, a mother's love always excepted, a doctrine which contains a gross error. The larger part of mankind may be ignorant of their motives; but any sympathy, physical or mental, is none the less based upon calculations made by brain or heart or animal instincts. Love is essentially an

egoistical affection, and egoism implies profound calculation. For the order of mind which is only impressed by outward and visible results, it may seem an improbable or unusual thing that a poor, lame, red-haired lad should find favor in the eyes of a beautiful girl like Césarine; and yet it was only what might be expected from the workings of the bourgeois mind in matters of sentiment. The explanation would account for other marriages that are a constant source of amazement to onlookers, between tall or beautiful women and insignificant men, or when some well-grown stripling marries some ugly little creature.

For a man affected with any physical deformity, be it a club foot, lameness, a hunch-back, excessive ugliness, spot, blemish, or disfigurement, Roguin's infirmity, or other anomalous affection for which his progenitors are not responsible, there are but two courses open; he must either make himself feared, or cultivate an exquisite goodness—he cannot afford to steer an undecided middle course between the two extremes like the rest of humanity. The first alternative requires talent, genius, or force of character; for a man can only inspire terror by his power to do harm, impose respect by his genius, or compel fear by his prodigious wit. In the second he studies to be adored; he lends himself admirably to feminine tyranny, and is wiser in love than others of irreproachable physical proportions.

Anselme Popinot had been brought up by the good Ragons, upright citizens of the best type, and by his uncle the judge —a course of training which, with his ingenuous and religious nature, had led him to redeem his slight deformity by the perfection of his character. Constance and César, struck by a disposition which makes youth so attractive, had often praised Anselme in Césarine's hearing. With all their narrowness in other respects, this shopkeeper and his wife possessed nobility of soul and hearts that were quick to comprehend. Their praises found an echo in the girl's own heart; in spite of her inexperience, she read in Anselme's frank eyes a passion that is always flattering, no matter what the age, rank, or figure of the lover may be.

Little Popinot, not being a well-shaped man, had all the more reasons for loving a woman. Should she be fair, he would be her lover till his dying day; love would give him ambition; he would work himself to death to make his wife happy; he would suffer her to be the sovereign mistress of his home; and her empire over him would be boundless.

This, crudely stated, is perhaps what Césarine thought, unconsciously within herself; she had had a bird's-eye glimpse of the harvests of love, and she had drawn her own inferences; her mother's happiness was under her eyes, she wished no other life for herself; instinctively she discerned in Anselme another César, polished by education, as she herself had been. In her dreams, Popinot was the mayor of an arrondissement, and she liked to imagine herself asking for subscriptions to charities in her district, as her own mother did in the parish of Saint-Roch. And so at length she forgot that one of Popinot's legs was shorter than the other, and would have been quite capable of asking, "Does he really limp?" She liked the clear eyes; she liked to see the change that came over them when, at a glance from her, they lighted up at once with a flash of timid love, and then fell despondently again.

Roguin's head clerk, Alexandre Crottat, gifted with a precocious knowledge of the world, acquired by professional experience, disgusted Césarine with his half-cynical, half-good-natured air, after putting her out of patience with his commonplace talk. Popinot's silence revealed a gentle nature; she liked to watch the half-sad smile with which he endured meaningless trivialities; the babble which made him smile always roused a feeling of annoyance in her; they smiled or looked condolence at each other.

Anselme's mental superiority did not prevent him from working hard with his hands; the way in which he threw himself into everything that he did also pleased Césarine; she guessed that while all the other assistants said, "Césarine is going to be married to M. Roguin's head clerk," Anselme,

lame and poor and red-haired, did not despair of winning her. The strength of a hope proves the strength of a love.

"Where is he going?" Césarine asked, trying to look indifferent.

"He is going to set up for himself in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants! And, upon my word, by the grace of God!——" But neither his wife nor daughter understood the ejaculation. When Birotteau's mind encountered any difficulty, he behaved like an insect that encounters an obstacle, he swerved to left or right; so now he changed the subject, promising himself to speak of Césarine to his wife.

"I told uncle your notions about Roguin and your fears; he began to laugh," he went on, addressing Constance.

"You ought never to repeat things that we say between ourselves," she cried. "Poor Roguin! he may be the most honest man in the world; he is fifty-eight years old, and I expect he no more thinks——"

She too broke off; she saw that Césarine was listening, and warned César of that fact by a glance.

"So I did well to strike the bargain."

"Why, you are the master," returned she.

César took both his wife's hands in his, and kissed her on the forehead. That answer had always been her passive form of assent to her husband's projects. And with that, Birotteau went downstairs into the shop.

"Come!" he cried, speaking to the assistants, "we will put up the shutters at ten o'clock. We must do a stroke of work, gentlemen! We must set about moving all the furniture from the first floor to the second to-night! We shall have to put the little pots into the big ones, as the saying is, so as to give my architect elbow-room to-morrow.—Popinot has gone out without leave," said César, looking round. "Oh! I forgot, he does not sleep here.—He is gone to see about the shop, or else he is putting down M. Vanquelin's ideas," he thought.

"We know why the furniture is being moved, sir," said Célestin, spokesman for the two assistants and Raguet, who

stood by him. "May we be allowed to congratulate you on an honor which reflects glory on the whole establishment? . . . Popinot told us——"

"Well, boys, it can't be helped; I have been decorated. So we are inviting a few friends, partly to celebrate the liberation of the soil, and partly on the occasion of my own promotion to the Legion of Honor. It may be that I have shown myself worthy of this signal mark of royal favor by the discharge of my functions at the Consular Tribunal, and by fighting for the Royalist cause—when I was your age, on the steps of Saint-Roch, on the 13th of Vendémiaire; and, on my word, Napoleon the Emperor, as they called him, gave me my wound. For I was wounded, and on the thigh, what is more, and Mme. Ragon nursed me. Be brave, and you will be rewarded! So there, you see, my children, that a mishap is never all loss."

"People don't fight in the streets nowadays," said Célestin.

"Well, we must hope," said César, and thereupon he took occasion to read his assistants a little homily, which he rounded off with an invitation.

The prospect of a dance put new life into the three assistants; under the stimulus of the excitement, the three, with Virginie and Raguet, performed acrobatic feats. They came and went up and down the stairs with their loads, and nothing was broken, nothing was upset. By two o'clock in the morning the removal was accomplished; César and his wife slept on the second floor, Célestin and the second assistant occupied Popinot's room. The third floor was converted, for the time being, into a furniture warehouse.

When the assistants had gone down into the shop after dinner, Popinot, usually so quiet and equable, had been as fidgety as a racehorse just arrived upon the course. A burning desire to do something great was upon him, induced by a superabundance of nervous fluid, which turns the diaphragm of the lover or the man of restless ambition into a furnace.

"What can be the matter with you?" Célestin had asked.

"What a day! I am setting up for myself, my dear fellow,"

he whispered in Célestin's ear, "and M. César is to be decorated."

"You are very lucky; the governor is helping you," exclaimed the assistant.

Popinot gave him no answer; he vanished, whirled away by the wind—the wind of success.

"Oh, as to lucky!" said an assistant, as he sorted gloves in dozens, to his neighbor, who was busy checking the prices on the tickets. "The governor has seen the eyes that Popinot has been making at Mlle. Césarine; he is a shrewd one, the governor, so he is getting rid of Anselme; it would be difficult to refuse outright, because of the relatives. Célestin takes the trick for generosity."

Anselme Popinot meanwhile had turned down the Rue Saint-Honoré and hurried along the Rue des Deux-Écus to secure some one in whom his commercial second-sight beheld the principal instrument of success. Judge Popinot had once done a service to this young man, the cleverest commercial traveler in Paris, whose activity and triumphant gift of the gab was to earn for him at a later day the title of "The Illustrious." At this time the great commercial traveler was devoting his energies to the hat trade and the "fancy-goods line"; he was simply Gaudissart as yet, without the prefix, but at the age of twenty-two he had already distinguished himself; his magnetic influence upon customers was beginning to be recognized. He was thin and bright-eyed at that time; he had an eloquent face, an indefatigable memory, a quick perception of the taste of those with whom he came in contact; he deserved to be, what he afterwards became—the king of commercial travelers, the Frenchman *par excellence.*

Popinot had come across Gaudissart some days previously, and the latter had announced that he was about to go on a journey; the hope of finding him still in Paris had sent Popinot flying down the Rue des Deux-Écus. At the coach-office he learned that the commercial traveler had taken his place. Gaudissart's leave-taking of his beloved city had taken the

shape of an evening at the Vaudeville, where there was a new play. Popinot resolved to wait for him. To confide the agency of the hazel-nut oil to this invaluable launcher of commercial enterprises, already courted and cherished by the best houses, was like drawing a bill of exchange on fortune!

Popinot had claims on Gaudissart. The commercial traveler, so skilled in the art of entangling that froward race, the petty country shopkeepers, in his toils, had once allowed himself to become entangled in a political web, in the first conspiracy against the Bourbons after the Hundred Days; and Gaudissart, to whom open air was a vital necessity, found himself in prison with a capital charge hanging over him. Judge Popinot, the examining magistrate, saw that it was a piece of youthful folly that implicated Gaudissart in the affair, and set him at liberty; but if the young man had chanced upon a magistrate eager to commend himself to the authorities, or upon a rabid Royalist, the luckless pioneer of commerce might have mounted the scaffold. Gaudissart, who knew that he owed his life to the judge, was in despair, because a barren gratitude was all the return he could make; and as it was impossible to thank a judge for doing justice, he had betaken himself to the Ragons, and there sworn fealty to the family of Popinot.

While Popinot waited, he naturally spent the time in going to see his shop in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants once more. He asked for the landlord's address, so as to come to terms with him about the lease. Then, wandering through the murky labyrinth about the Great Market, with his thoughts full of ways and means of making a rapid fortune, Popinot came into the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, and there met with a wonderful and auspicious opportunity, with which César's heart should be gladdened on the morrow. Then he took up his post at the door of the Hôtel du Commerce at the end of the Rue des Deux-Écus; and towards midnight heard, afar off, a voice uplifted in the Rue de Grenelle; it was Gaudissart singing a bit of the last song in the piece, to the accompaniment of the sound of a walking-stick, trailed with expression upon the pavement.

"Sir," cried Anselme, suddenly emerging from the doorway, "can I have a couple of words with you?"

"Eleven, if you like," said the other, raising a loaded cane.

"I am Popinot," said poor Anselme.

"Right," said Gaudissart, recognizing his friend. "What do you want? Money? Absent on leave, but there is some somewhere. An arm for a duel? I am at your service from heel to head.

"'You see him where he stands—
Every inch a Frenchman and a soldier!'"

"Come and have ten minutes' talk with me, not in your room, we might be overheard, but on the Quai de l'Horloge; there is nobody there at this time of night," said Popinot, "it is a question of the greatest importance."

"You are in a hurry, are you? Come along!"

Ten minutes later, Gaudissart, now put in possession of Popinot's secrets, recognized the importance of the matter.

"Approach, ye hairdressers and retail perfumers," cried Gaudissart, mimicking Lafon in the Cid. "I will get hold of all the perfumers of France and Navarre. Oh! I have it! I was going away, but I shall stop here now and take agencies from the Parisian perfumery trade."

"Why?"

"To choke off your competitors, innocent! By taking on their agencies, I can make their perfidious cosmetics drink to their own confusion in your oil, for I shall talk of nothing else and push no other kind. A fine commercial traveler's dodge! Aha! we are the diplomatists of commerce. Famous! As for your prospectus I will see to it. I have known Andoche Finot since we were boys; his father is a hatter in the Rue du Coq, the old fellow started me; it was through him that I began to travel in the hat line. Andoche is a very clever fellow; he has the cleverness of all the heads that his father ever fitted with hats. He is in the literary line; he does the minor theatres for the *Courrier des Spectacles*. His father, an old fox, has abundant reason for not liking cleverness; he

doesn't believe in cleverness; it is impossible to make him see that cleverness will sell, and that a young man of spirit can make a fortune by his wits; indeed, as to spirit, the only spirit he approves of is proof-spirit. Old Finot is reducing young Finot by famine. Andoche can do anything, and he is my friend, moreover, and I don't rub against fools (except in the way of business). Finot does mottoes for the *Fidèle Berger,* which pays him, while the newspapers, for which he works like a galley slave, snub him right and left. How jealous they are in that line! It is just like it is in the fancy article trade.

"Finot wrote a splendid one-act comedy for Mlle. Mars, the greatest of the great. (Ah! there's a woman that I admire!) Well, and to see it put on the stage at all, he had to take it to the Gaîté. Andoche understands prospectuses; he enters into a man's ideas about business, he is not proud, he will block out our prospectus *gratis.* Goodness! we will treat him to a bowl of punch and little cakes; for, no nonsense, Popinot; I will travel for you without commission or expenses; your competitors shall pay me, I will bamboozle them. Let us understand each other clearly. The success of this thing is a point of honor with me; my reward shall be to be best-man at your wedding! I will go to Italy, Germany, and England! I will take placards in every language with me, and have them posted up everywhere, in the villages, at church doors, and in all the good situations that I know in country towns! The oil shall make a blaze; it shall be on every head! Ah! your marriage will not be a marriage in water-colors; it shall be done in oils! You shall have your Césarine, or I am not 'The Illustrious,' a nickname old Finot gave me because I made a success of his gray hats. I shall be sticking to my own line, too, the human head; oil and hats, as is well known, are meant to preserve the hair of the public."

Popinot went to his aunt's house, where he was to spend the night, in such a fever, brought on by visions of success, that the streets seemed to him to be rivers of oil. He scarcely

slept at all, dreamed that his hair was growing at a furious rate, and beheld two angels, who unrolled above his head a scroll (as in a pantomime), whereon the words *Cesarian Oil* were written; and he awoke, but remembered his dream, and determined to give the name to the oil of hazel-nuts. He saw the will of heaven revealed in this fancy.

César and Popinot were both at the factory in the Faubourg du Temple long before the hazel-nuts arrived. While they waited for Mme. Madou's porters, Popinot in high glee told the history of his treaty of alliance with Gaudissart.

"We have the illustrious Gaudissart for us; we shall be millionaires!" cried the perfumer, holding out a hand to his cashier, with the air of a Louis XIV. receiving a Maréchal de Villars after Denain.

"And yet another thing," said the happy assistant, drawing a bottle from his pocket, a gourd-shaped flask, flattened so as to present several sides. "I have found ten thousand bottles like this one, ready made and washed, at four sous and six months' credit."

"Anselme," said Birotteau, beholding this marvel, "yesterday (here his voice grew solemn), yesterday, in the garden of the Tuileries—yes, no longer ago than yesterday, your words to me were, 'I shall succeed.' To-day, I myself say to you, 'You will succeed!' Four sous! Six months! An entirely new shape! Macassar is shaking in his shoes; what a deathblow for Macassar! What a good thing that I have bought up all the nuts I could lay my hands on in Paris! But where did you find these bottles?"

"I was waiting to speak to Gaudissart, and sauntering about——"

"Just as I once did," exclaimed Birotteau.

"And as I went down the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, I saw a wholesale glass merchant's place, a dealer in bell-glasses and glass shades, who has a very large stock; I saw this bottle—— Oh! it stared me in the face like a flash of light; something said, 'Here is the thing for you!'"

"A born merchant! He shall have my daughter," muttered César.

"In I went, and saw thousands of the bottles standing there in boxes."

"Did you ask him about them?"

"You do not think me such a ninny!" cried Anselme, grieved at the thought.

"Born merchant!" repeated Birotteau.

"I went in to ask for glass shades for little wax statuettes. While I was bargaining for the glass shades, I found fault with the shape of these bottles. That led to a general confession; my bottle merchant went from one thing to another, and told me that Faille and Bouchot, who failed lately, were about to bring out a cosmetic, and wanted an out-of-the-way shape. He distrusted them; he wanted half the money down; Faille and Bouchot, hoping for a success, parted with the money, and the failure came out while the bottles were being made. When they put in a claim to the trustees for the rest, the trustees compromised the matter by leaving them with all the bottles and half the money that had been paid, as an indemnity for goods which they said were absurdly shaped, and impossible to dispose of. The bottles cost him eight sous, and he would be glad to let any one have them for four. He might have them on his hands for Heaven knew how long; there was no sale for such a shape. 'Will you engage to supply ten thousand at four sous? I can take the bottles off your hands; I am M. Birotteau's assistant.' And so I opened up the subject, and drew him out, led him on, and put pressure on my man, and he is ours."

"Four sous!" said Birotteau. "Do you know that we can bring out the oil at three francs, and make thirty sous, leaving twenty to the retailers?"

"The Cesarian Oil!" cried Popinot.

"Cesarian Oil? . . . Ah, master lover, you have a mind to flatter father and daughter. Very well; let it be Cesarian Oil if you like. The Cæsars conquered the world; they must have had famous heads of hair."

"Cæsar was bald," said Popinot.

"Because he did not use our oil, people will say. The Cesarian Oil at three francs; Macassar Oil costs twice as much. Gaudissart is in it; we shall make a hundred thousand francs a year, for we will set down all heads that respect themselves for a dozen bottles every twelve-month; eighteen francs of profit! Say there are eighteen thousand heads—a hundred and forty-four thousand francs. We shall be millionaires."

When the hazel-nuts arrived, Raguet and the work-people, with Popinot and César, cracked the shells, and a sufficient quantity was pressed. In four hours' time they had several pounds' weight of oil. Popinot took some of it to Vauquelin, who presented him with a formula for diluting the essential oil with a less expensive medium and for perfuming it. Popinot straightway took steps for taking out a patent for the invention and the improvement. It was Popinot's ambition to pay his share of the expense of starting the enterprise, and the devoted Gaudissart lent the money for the deposit.

Prosperity has an intoxicating effect, which always turns weak heads. One result of this uplifted state of mind is readily foreseen. Grindot came. He brought with him a sketch in water-colors of a charming interior, the design for the future rooms when furnished. Birotteau was carried away with it. He agreed to everything, and the workmen began at once; every stroke of the pickaxe drew groans from the house, and from Constance. The painter, M. Lourdois, a very wealthy contractor, who engaged to leave nothing undone, talked of gilding the drawing-room. Constance interposed at this.

"M. Lourdois," said she, "you have thirty thousand francs a year of your own; you live in your own house, and you can do what you like in it; but for people like us——"

"Madame, commerce ought to shine; it should not suffer itself to be eclipsed by the aristocracy. Besides, here is M. Birotteau in the Government; he is a public man——"

"Yes, but he is still in the shop," said Constance aloud, before the assistants and her five auditors, "neither he, nor I, nor his friends, nor his enemies will forget that."

Birotteau raised himself on tiptoe several times, with his hands clasped behind his back.

"My wife is right," said he. "We will be modest in prosperity. Besides, so long as a man is in business, he ought to be careful of his expenses, and to keep them within bounds; indeed, he is bound by law not to indulge in 'excessive expenditure.' If the enlargement of my premises, and the amount spent on the alterations, exceeds a certain limit, it would be imprudent in me to go beyond it; you yourself would blame me, Lourdois. The quarter has its eyes upon me; successful people are looked upon jealously and envied.—Ah! you will soon know that, young man," he said, addressing Grindot; "if they slander us, at any rate let us give them no cause to say evil of us."

"Neither slander nor spite can touch you," said Lourdois; "your position makes an exception of you; and you have had such a great experience of business, that you know how to keep your affairs within due limits. You are shrewd."

"I have had some experience of business, it is true; do you know the reason why we are enlarging our house? If I exact a heavy penalty to secure punctuality it is——"

"No."

"Well, then, my wife and I are inviting a few friends, partly to celebrate the liberation of the soil, partly on the occasion of my promotion to the Order of the Legion of Honor."

"What, what?" cried Lourdois. "Have they given you the Cross?"

"Yes. It may be that I have shown myself worthy of this signal mark of Royal favor by discharging my functions at the Consular Tribunal, and by fighting for the Royalist cause on the 13th of Vendémiaire at Saint-Roch, when I was wounded by Napoleon. Will you come and bring your wife and your young lady——?"

"Enchanted by the honor you condescend to bestow upon me," said Lourdois, a Liberal. "But you are a droll fellow, Birotteau; you mean to make sure that I shall keep my word, and that is why you ask me to come. Well, well; I will set

my best workmen on to it; we will have roaring fires to dry the paint and use drying processes, for it will not do to dance in a room full of steam from the damp plaster. The surface shall be varnished, so that there shall be no smell."

Three days later, the announcement of Birotteau's forthcoming ball created a flutter in the commercial world of that quarter. And not only so, every one could see for himself the timber props, necessitated by the hurried alteration of the staircase, and the square wooden shaft holes, through which the rubbish was shot into the carts beneath. The men in their haste worked by torchlight, for they had a night-and-day shift, and this collected idlers and inquisitive gazers in the street. On such preparations as these, the gossip of the neighborhood reared sumptuous fabrics of conjecture.

On the Sunday, when the documents relative to the building land were to be signed, M. and Mme. Ragon, and uncle Pillerault, came at four o'clock, after vespers. César said that as the house was so much pulled to pieces, he could only ask Charles Claparon, Roguin, and Crottat for that day. The notary brought a copy of the *Journal des Débats,* in which M. de la Billardière had inserted the following paragraph:—

"We hear that the liberation of the soil will be celebrated with enthusiasm throughout France; but, in Paris, the members of the municipal administration have felt that the time had come for reviving the splendor of the capital, which has been eclipsed during the foreign occupation, from a feeling of patriotism. Each of the mayors and deputy-mayors proposes to give a ball, so that the winter season promises to be a very brilliant one, and the National movement will be followed up. Among the many fêtes about to take place is the much-talked-of ball to be given by M. Birotteau, recently nominated for the Legion of Honor, and so widely known for his devotion to the Royalist cause. M. Birotteau, wounded in the affair of Saint-Roch on the 13th of Vendémiaire, and one of the most highly respected judges of the Consular Tribunal, has doubly deserved this distinction."

"How well they write nowadays!" exclaimed César.—"They are talking about us in the paper," he added, turning to Pillerault.

"Well, and what of that?" returned the uncle, who particularly detested the *Journal des Débats.*

"Perhaps the paragraph may sell some of the Pâte des Sultanes and the Toilet Lotion," said Mme. César in a low voice to Mme. Ragon. Mme. Birotteau did not share her husband's exhilaration.

Mme. Ragon, a tall, thin woman, with a sharp nose and thin lips, looked a very fair imitation of a marquise of the *ancien régime.* A somewhat wide margin of red encircled her eyes, as sometimes happens with aged women who have known many troubles. Her fine austere face, in spite of its kindliness, was dignified, and there was moreover a quaint something about her which struck beholders, yet did not excite a smile, a something interpreted by her manner and her dress. She wore mittens; she carried in all weathers a cane umbrella, such as Marie Antoinette used at the Trianon; her favorite color was that particular pale shade of brown known as *feuille-morte;* her skirts hung from her waist in folds, which will never be seen again, for the dowager ladies of a bygone day have taken their secret with them. Mme. Ragon had not given up the black mantilla bordered with square-meshed black lace; the ornaments in her old-fashioned caps reminded you of the filagree work on old picture-frames. She took snuff with the dainty neatness and the little gestures which a younger generation may recall, if they have been so fortunate as to see their great-aunt or grandmother solemnly set her gold snuff-box on the table beside her, and shake the stray grains from her fichu.

The Sieur Ragon was a little man, five feet high at the most, with a countenance of the nutcracker type. Two eyes were visible, two prominent cheek-bones, a nose, and a chin. As he had lost his teeth, he mumbled half his words, but he talked like a brook, politely, somewhat pompously, and always with a smile—the same smile with which he had greeted the

fair ladies of quality whom one chance or another brought to his shop. His hair, tightly scraped back from his forehead and powdered, described a snowy half-moon on his head, with a pair of "pigeon's wings" on either side of a neat queue tied with ribbon. He wore a cornflower-blue coat, a white waistcoat, silk breeches and stockings, black silk gloves, and shoes with gold buckles to them. The most peculiar thing about him was his habit of walking out in the street hat in hand. He looked rather like a messenger of the Chamber of Peers, or some usher-in-waiting at the palace—one of those attendant satellites of some great power, which shine with a reflected glory, and remain intrinsically insignificant.

"Well, Birotteau," he remarked, and from his tone he might have been addressing an assistant, "are you sorry now, my boy, that you took our advice in those days? Did we ever doubt the gratitude of our beloved royal family?"

"You must be very happy, my dear," said Mme. Ragon, addressing Mme. Birotteau.

"Yes, indeed," returned the fair Constance, who always fell under the charm of that cane umbrella, those butterfly caps, those tight-fitting sleeves, and the ample fichu *à la Julie* that Mme. Ragon wore.

"Césarine looks charming.—Come here, pretty child," said Mme. Ragon. She spoke in a patronizing manner, and with a high head-voice.

"Shall we settle the business before dinner?" asked uncle Pillerault.

"We are waiting for M. Claparon," said Roguin; "he was dressing when I left him."

"M. Roguin," César began, "does he quite understand that we are to dine in a wretched little *entresol*——"

("Sixteen years ago he thought it magnificent," murmured Constance.)

"Among the rubbish, and with all the workmen about?"

"Pooh! you will find him a good fellow, and not hard to please," said Roguin.

"I have left Raguet to look after the shop; we cannot come

in and out of our own door now; as you have seen, it has all been pulled down," César returned.

"Why did you not bring your nephew?" asked Pillerault of Mme. Ragon.

"Shall we see him later?" suggested Césarine.

"No, darling," said Mme. Ragon. "Anselme, dear boy, is working himself to death. I am afraid of that close street where the sun never shines, that vile-smelling Rue des Cinq-Diamants; the gutter is always black or blue or green. I am afraid he may die there. But when young people set their minds upon anything——!" she said, turning to Césarine with a gesture that interpreted "mind" as "heart."

"Then, has the lease been signed?" asked César.

"Yesterday, before a notary," Ragon replied. "He has taken the place for eighteen years, but he pays the rent six months in advance."

"Well, M. Ragon, are you satisfied with me?" Birotteau asked. "I have given him the secret of a new discovery—in fact!"

"We know you by heart, César," said little Ragon, taking César's hands, and pressing them with devout friendliness.

Roguin meanwhile was not without inward qualms. Claparon was about to appear on the scene, and his habits and manner of talking might be something of a shock to these respectable citizens. He thought it necessary to prepare their minds, and spoke, addressing Ragon, Pillerault, and the women.

"You will see an eccentric character," he said; "he hides his talents beneath shocking bad manners; his ideas have raised him from a very low position. No doubt he will acquire better tastes in the society of bankers. You might come across him slouching half-fuddled along the boulevard, or in a café playing at billiards; he looks like a great hulking idiot.—But nothing of the kind; he is thinking all the time, pondering how to put life into trade by new ideas."

"I can understand that," said Birotteau; "my best ideas came to me while I was sauntering about, didn't they, dear?"

"Claparon makes up for lost time at night, after spending the daytime in meditating over business combinations. All these very clever people lead queer inexplicable lives," Roguin continued. "Well, with all his desultory ways, he gains his end, as I can testify. He made all the owners of our building land give way at last; they were not willing, they demurred at this and that; he mystified them—tired them out; day after day he went to see them, and this time the lots are ours."

A peculiar sounding *broum! broum!* characteristic of drinkers of strong waters and spirits, announced the arrival of the most grotesque personage in this story—who was in the future to enact the part of the arbiter of César's destinies. The perfumer hurried down the narrow, dark staircase, partly to tell Raguet to close the shop, partly to make his excuses for receiving Claparon in the dining-room.

"Eh, what? Oh, it will do very well for stowing the vict——, I mean for doing business in."

In spite of Roguin's skilful opening, the entrance of the sham great banker at once produced an unpleasant impression upon those well-bred citizens, M. and Mme. Ragon, upon the observant Pillerault, and upon Césarine and her mother.

At the age of twenty-eight, or thereabouts, the former commercial traveler had not a hair on his head, and wore a wig of corkscrew curls. Such a manner of dressing the hair demands a girlish freshness, a milk-white skin, and the daintiest feminine charm; so it brought out all the vulgarity of a pimpled countenance, a dark-red complexion, flushed like that of a stage coachman, and covered with premature wrinkles and deeply cut grotesque lines which told of a dissolute life; its ill effects could be read only too plainly in the bad state of his teeth and the black specks dotted over the shriveled skin.

There was something about Claparon that suggested the provincial actor who frequents fairs, and is prepared to play any and every part, to whose worn, shrunken cheeks and

flabby lips the paint refuses to adhere; the tongue always wagging even when the man is drunk; the shameless eyes, the compromising gestures. Such a face as this, lighted up by the hilarious flames of punch, little befitted a man accustomed to important business. Indeed, only after prolonged and necessary studies in mimicry had Claparon succeeded in adopting a manner not wholly out of keeping with his supposed importance. Du Tillet had assisted personally at Claparon's toilette, anxious as a nervous manager over the first appearance of his principal actor, for he trembled lest the vicious habits of a reckless life should appear through the veneer of the banker.

"Say as little as you can," said his mentor; "a banker never babbles; he acts, thinks, meditates, listens, and ponders. So, to look like a real banker, you must either not speak at all, or say insignificant things. Keep those ribald eyes of yours quiet; look solemn at the risk of looking stupid. In politics, be for the Government, but keep to generalities, such as—'There is a heavy budget; compromise as parties stand is out of the question; Liberalism is dangerous; the Bourbons ought to avoid all collisions; Liberalism is a cloak to hide the schemes of the Coalition; the Bourbons are inaugurating an epoch of prosperity, so let us give them our support, whether we are well affected to them or not; France has had enough of political experiments,' and the like. And don't sprawl over all the tables; remember that you have to sustain the dignity of a millionaire. Don't snort like a pensioner when you take snuff; play with your snuff-box, and look at your boots or at the ceiling before you give an answer; look as wise as you can, in fact. Above all things, rid yourself of your unlucky habit of fingering everything. In society a banker ought to look as if he were glad to let his fingers rest. And look here! you work at night, you are stupid with making calculations, there are so many things to consider in the starting of an enterprise! so much thinking is involved! Grumble, above all things, and say that trade is very bad. Trade is dull, slow, hard to move, per-

plexing. Keep to that, and let particulars alone. Don't begin to sing drolleries of Béranger's at table, and don't drink too much; you will ruin your prospects if you get tipsy. Roguin will keep an eye on you; you are going among moral people, respectable, steady-going folk, don't frighten them by letting out some of your pot-house principles."

This homily produced on Charles Claparon's mind an effect very similar to the strange sensation of his new suit of clothes. The rollicking prodigal, hail-fellow-well-met with everybody, accustomed to the comfortable, disreputable garments in which his outer man was as much at home as his thoughts in the language that clothed them, held himself upright, stiff as a poker in the new clothes for which the tailor had kept him waiting to the last minute, and was as ill at ease in his movements as in this new phraseology. He put out a hand unthinkingly towards a flask or a box, then, hurriedly recollecting himself, drew it in again, and in the same way he began a sentence and stopped short in the middle, distinguishing himself by a ludicrous incoherence, which did not escape the observant Pillerault. His round face, like the rakish-looking corkscrew ringlets of his wig, were totally out of keeping with his manner, and he seemed to think one thing and say another. But the good folk concluded that his inconsequence was the result of preoccupation.

"He does so much business," said Roguin.

"Business has given him very little breeding," Mme. Ragon said to Césarine.

M. Roguin overheard her, and laid a finger on his lips. "He is rich, clever, and honorable to a fault," he said, bending to Mme. Ragon.

"He may be excused something for such qualities as those," said Pillerault to Ragon.

"Let us read over the papers before dinner," said Roguin. "We are alone."

Mme. Ragon, Césarine, and Constance left the contracting parties, Pillerault, Ragon, César, Roguin, and Claparon,

to listen to the reading of the documents by Alexandre Crottat. César signed a mortgage bond for forty thousand francs secured on the land and the factory in the Faubourg du Temple (the money had been lent by one of Roguin's clients); he paid over to Roguin Pillerault's order on the bank, gave (without taking a receipt) twenty thousand francs worth of bills from his portfolio, and drew another bill for the remaining hundred and forty thousand francs on Charles Claparon.

"I have no receipt to give you," said that gentleman. "You are acting for your own side with M. Roguin, as we are doing for our share. Our vendors will receive their money from him in coin; I only undertake to complete your payment by paying a hundred and forty thousand francs for your bills——"

"That is right," said Pillerault.

"Well, then, gentlemen, let us call in the ladies again, for it is cold without them," said Claparon, with a look at Roguin to see whether he had gone too far.

"Ladies! . . . Ah! mademoiselle is your young lady, of course," said Claparon, looking at Birotteau, and straightening himself up. "Well, well, you are not a bungler. Not one of the roses that you have distilled can be compared with her, and perhaps it is because you have distilled roses that——"

"Faith!" said Roguin, interrupting him, "I own that I am hungry."

"Very well, let us have dinner," said Birotteau.

"We are to have dinner in the presence of a notary," said Claparon, with an important air.

"You do a great deal of business, do you not?" said Pillerault, purposely seating himself next to the banker.

"A tremendous amount, wholesale," replied Claparon; "but trade is dull, hard to move—there are canals now. Oh, canals! You have no idea how busy we are with canals. That is comprehensible. The Government wants canals. A canal is a want generally felt. All the trade of a depart-

ment is interested in a canal, you know! A stream, said Pascal, is a moving highway. The next thing is a market, and markets depend on embankments, for there are a frightful lot of embankments, and the embankments interest the poorer classes, and that means a loan, which finally benefits the poor! Voltaire said, *'Canal, canard, canaille!'* But Government depends for information on its own engineers; it is difficult to meddle in the matter, at least, it is difficult to come to an understanding with them; for the Chamber —— Oh! sir, the Chamber gives us trouble! The Chamber does not want to grapple with the political question hidden beneath the financial question. There is bad faith on all sides. Would you believe this? There are the Kellers—well, then, François Keller is a public speaker, he attacks the measures of the Government as to the funds and canals. He comes home, and then my fine gentleman finds us with our propositions; they are favorable, and he has to make it up with the aforesaid Government, which he attacked so insolently an hour ago. The interests of the public speaker clash with the interests of the banker; we are between two fires. Now you understand how thorny affairs become; you have to satisfy everybody—the clerks, the people in the chambers, and the people in the ante-chambers, and the Ministers——"

"The Ministers?" asked Pillerault, who wished to probe this partner's mind thoroughly.

"Yes, sir, the Ministers."

"Well, then, the newspapers are right," said Pillerault.

"Here is uncle on politics," said Birotteau; "M. Claparon has set him off."

"Newspapers!" said Claparon, "there are some more confounded humbugs! Newspapers throw us all into confusion; they do us a good turn now and then, but the cruel nights they make me spend! I would as lief be without them; they are the ruin of my eyes in fact, poring over them and working out calculations."

"But to return to the Ministers," said Pillerault, hoping for revelations.

"Ministers have exigencies which are purely governmental. —But what am I eating; is it ambrosia?" asked Claparon, interrupting himself. "Here is a sort of sauce that you only have in citizens' houses; you never get it at grub-shops——"

At that word, the ornaments on Mme. Ragon's cap skipped like rams. Claparon gathered that the expression was low, and tried to retrieve his error.

"That is what the heads of large banking firms call the high-class taverns—Véry, and the Frères Provençaux. Well, neither those vile grub-shops, nor our most accomplished cooks, make you a soft, mellow sauce; some give you water with lemon-juice in it, and others give you chemical concoctions."

The conversation at dinner chiefly consisted in attacks from Pillerault, who tried to plumb his man, and only found emptiness; he looked upon him as a dangerous person.

"It is going on all right," said Roguin in Charles Claparon's ear.

"Oh! I shall get out of my clothes to-night, I suppose," answered Claparon, who was gasping for breath.

"We are obliged to use our dining-room as a sitting-room, sir," said Birotteau, "because we are looking forward to a little gathering of our friends in eighteen days' time, partly to celebrate the liberation of the soil——"

"Right, sir; I myself am also for the Government. My political convictions incline me to the *statu quo* of the great man who guides the destinies of the house of Austria, a fine fellow! Keep what you have, to get more; and, in the first place, get more, to keep what you have.—So now you know the bottom of my opinions, which have the honor to be those of Prince Metternich!"

"Partly on the occasion of my promotion to the Order of the Legion of Honor," César went on.

"Why, yes, I know. Now who was telling me about that? Was it the Kellers, or Nucingen?"

Roguin, amazed at so much presence of mind, signified his admiration.

"Oh, no; it was at the Chamber."

"At the Chamber. Was it M. de la Billardière?" asked César.

"The very man."

"He is charming," said César, addressing his uncle.

"He pours out talk, talk, talk, till you are drowned in talk," said Pillerault.

"It may be," resumed Birotteau, "that I have shown myself worthy of this favor——"

"By your achievements in perfumery; the Bourbons know how to reward merit of every kind. Ah! let us stand by our generous legitimate Princes, to whom we shall owe unheard-of prosperity about to be.—For, you may be sure of it, the Restoration feels that she must enter the lists with the Empire, and the Restoration will make peaceful conquests; you will see conquests! . . ."

"You will no doubt honor us by coming to our ball, sir," said Mme. César.

"To spend an evening with you, madame, I would miss a chance of making millions."

"He certainly is a babbler," said César in his uncle's ear.

While the waning glory of the *Queen of Roses* was about to shed abroad its parting rays, a faint star was rising above the commercial horizon; at that very hour, little Popinot was laying the foundations of his fortune in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants. The Rue des Cinq-Diamants, a short, narrow thoroughfare, where loaded wagons can scarcely pass each other, runs between the Rue des Lombards and the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, into which it opens just opposite the end of the Rue Quincampoix, that street so famous in the history of France and of old Paris.

In spite of this narrowness, the near neighborhood of the druggists' quarter made the place convenient; and from that point of view, Popinot had not made a bad choice. The house (the second from the end nearest the Rue des Lom-

bards) was so dark, that at times it was necessary to work by artificial light in the daytime. Popinot had taken possession the evening before of all its darkest and most unsavory recesses. His predecessor, a dealer in treacle and raw sugars, had left his mark on the place; the walls, the yard, and the storehouse bore unmistakable traces of his occupation.

Imagine a large and roomy shop, and huge doors barred with iron and painted dragon-green, the solid iron scroll-work, with bolt heads as large as mushrooms by way of ornament. The shop was adorned and protected, as bakers' shops used to be, by wire-work lattices, which bulged at the bottom, and was paved with great slabs of white stone, cracked for the most part. The walls of a guard-house are not yellower nor barer. Further on came the back-shop and kitchen, which looked out into the yard; and behind these again a second storeroom, which must at one time have been a stable. An inside staircase had been contrived in the back-shop, by which you gained two rooms that looked out upon the street; here Popinot meant to have his counting-house and his ledgers. Above the warehouse there were three small rooms, all backed against the party-wall, and lighted by windows on the side of the yard. It was in these dilapidated rooms that Popinot proposed to live.

The view from the windows was shut in by the high walls that rose about the dingy, crooked yard, walls so damp that even in the driest weather they looked as if they had been newly distempered. The cracks in the paving-stones were choked with black, malodorous filth, deposited there during the tenancy of the dealer in treacle and raw sugars. So much for the outlook. As to the rooms themselves, only one of them boasted a fireplace; the floors were of brick, the walls were unpapered.

Gaudissart and Popinot had been busy there ever since the morning, putting up a cheap wall-paper with their own hands in the ugly room; a journeyman paperhanger whom Gaudissart ferreted out had varnished it for them. The

furniture consisted of a student's mattress, a wooden bedstead painted red, a rickety nightstand, a venerable chest of drawers, a table, a couple of armchairs, and half-a-dozen ordinary chairs, a present from Popinot the judge to his nephew. Gaudissart had put a cheap pier-glass over the chimney-piece. It was almost eight o'clock in the evening, and the two friends, sitting before a blazing fire, were about to discuss the remains of their breakfast.

"Away with the cold mutton! It is out of character in a house-warming," cried Gaudissart.

Popinot held up his last twenty-franc piece, which was to pay for the prospectus. "But I——" he began.

"I? . . ." retorted Gaudissart, sticking a forty-franc piece into his eye.

A knock at the street door reverberated through the yard. It was Sunday, the workpeople were taking their holiday away from their workshops, and the idle echoes greeted every sound.

"There is my trusty man from the Rue de la Poterie," Gaudissart went on. "For my own part, it is not simply 'I,' but 'I have.'"

And, in fact, a waiter appeared, followed by two kitchen boys, carrying between them three wicker baskets, containing a dinner, and crowned by six bottles of wine selected with discrimination.

"But how are we to eat such a lot of things?" asked Popinot.

"There is the man of letters," cried Gaudissart. "Finot understands the pomps and vanities. The artless youth will be here directly with a prospectus fit to make your hair stand on end (neat that, eh?), and prospectuses are always dry work. You must water the seeds if you mean to have flowers.—Here, minions," he added, striking an attitude for the benefit of the kitchen-boys, "here's gold for you."

He held out six sous with a gesture worthy of his idol, Napoleon.

"Thank you, M. Gaudissart," said the scullions, more pleased with the joke than with the money.

"As for thee, my son," he continued, turning to the waiter who remained, "there is a portress here. She crouches in the depths of a cave, where at times she does some cooking, as erewhile Nausicaa did the washing, simply by way of relaxation. Hie thee to her, work on her trustful nature; interest her, young man, in the temperature of thy hot dishes. Say to her that she shall be blessed, and above all things respected, highly respected, by Felix Gaudissart, son of Jean-François Gaudissart, and grandson of Gaudissart, vile proletaries of remote lineage, his ancestors. Off with you, and act in such a sort that everything shall be good; for if it isn't, I will make you laugh on the wrong side of your face."

There was another knock at the door.

"That is the ingenious Andoche," said Gaudissart.

A stout young fellow suddenly entered. He had somewhat chubby cheeks, was of middle height, and from head to foot looked like the hatter's son. A certain shrewdness lurked beneath the air of constraint that sat on his rounded features. The habitual dejection of a man who is tired of poverty left him, and a hilarious expression crossed his countenance, at the sight of the preparations on the table and the significant seals on the bottle-corks. At Gaudissart's shout, a twinkle came into the pale-blue eyes, the big head, on which a Kalmuck physiognomy had been carved, rolled from side to side, and he gave Popinot a distant greeting, in which there was neither servility nor respect, like a man who feels out of his element and stands on his dignity.

Finot was just beginning to discover that he had no sort of talent for literature; he did not think of quitting his calling; he meant to exploit literature by raising himself on the shoulders of men who possessed the talent which he lacked. Instead of doing ill-paid work himself, he would turn his business capacities to account. He was just at the turning-point; he had exhausted the expedients of humility;

he had experienced to the full the humiliation of failure; and, like those who take a wide outlook over the financial world, he resolved to change his tactics, and to be insolent in future. He needed capital in the first instance, and Gaudissart had opened out a prospect of making the money by putting Popinot's oil before the public.

"You will make his arrangements with the newspapers," Gaudissart had said, "but don't swindle him; if you do, there will be a duel to the death between us; give him value for his money!"

Popinot looked uneasily at the "author." Your true man of business regards an author with mixed feelings, in which alarm and curiosity are blended with compassion; and though Popinot had been well educated, his relations' attitude of mind and ways of thinking, together with a course of drudgery in a shop, had produced their effect on his intelligence, and he bent beneath the yoke of use and wont. You can see this by noticing the metamorphoses which ten years will effect among a hundred boys, who when they left school or college were almost exactly alike.

Andoche mistook the impression which he had made for admiration.

"Very well. Let us run through the prospectus before dinner, then it will be off our minds, and we can drink," said Gaudissart. "It is uncomfortable to read after dinner; the tongue is digesting too."

"Sir," said Popinot, "a prospectus often means a whole fortune."

"And for nobodies like me," said Andoche, "fortune is nothing but a prospectus."

"Ah! very good," said Gaudissart. "That droll fellow of an Andoche has wit enough for the Forty."

"For a hundred," said Popinot, awestruck with the idea.

Gaudissart snatched up the manuscript, and read aloud, and with emphasis, the first two words—"Cephalic Oil!"

"I like Cesarian Oil better," said Popinot.

"You don't know them in the provinces, my friend," said

Gaudissart. "There is a surgical operation known by that name, and they are so stupid, that they will think your oil is meant to facilitate childbirth; and if they start off with the notion, it would be too hard work to bring them all the way back to hair again."

"Without defending the name," observed the author, "I would call your attention to the fact that Cephalic Oil means oil for the head, and resumes your ideas."

"Go on!" said Popinot impatiently. ..

And here follows a second historical document, a prospectus, which even at this day is circulating by thousands among retail perfumers.

GOLD MEDAL, PARIS 1824*

CEPHALIC OIL

(Improved Patent).

No cosmetic can make the hair grow; and in the same way, it cannot be dyed by chemical preparations without danger to the seat of the intelligence. Science has recently proclaimed that the hair is not a living substance, and that there is no means of preventing it from blanching or falling out. To prevent xerasia and baldness, the bulb at the roots should be preserved from all atmospheric influences, and the natural temperature of the head evenly maintained. The "Cephalic Oil," based on these principles established by the Royal Academy of Sciences, induces the important result so highly prized by the ancients, the Romans and Greeks, and the nations of the North—a fine head of hair. Learned research has brought to light the fact that the nobles of olden times, who were distinguished by their long, flowing locks, used no other means than these; their recipe, long lost, has been ingeniously rediscovered by A. Popinot, inventor of "Cephalic Oil."

To preserve the glands, and not to provoke an impossible or hurtful stimulation of the dermis which contains them, is, therefore, the

* The next "Quinquennial Exhibition."

function of "Cephalic Oil." This oil, which exhales a delicious fragrance, prevents the exfoliation of the pellicle; while the substances of which it is composed (the essential oil of the hazel-nut being the principal element) counteract the effects of atmospheric air upon the head, thus preventing chills, catarrh, and all unpleasant encephalic affections by maintaining the natural temperature. In this manner the glands, which contain the hair-producing secretions, are never attacked by heat or cold. A fine head of hair —that glorious product so highly valued by either sex—may be retained to extreme old age by the use of "Cephalic Oil," which imparts to the hair the brilliancy, silkiness, and gloss which constitutes the charm of children's heads.

Directions for use are issued on the wrapper of every bottle.

DIRECTIONS FOR USE

It is perfectly useless to apply oil to the hair itself: besides being an absurd superstition, it is an obnoxious practice, for the cosmetic leaves its traces everywhere.

It is only necessary to part the hair with a comb, and to apply the oil to the roots every morning with a small sponge, proceeding thus until the whole surface of the skin has received a slight application, the hair having been previously combed and brushed.

To prevent spurious imitations, each bottle bears the signature of the inventor. Sold at the price of THREE FRANCS by A. POPINOT, Rue des Cinq-Diamants, Quartier des Lombards, Paris.

It is particularly requested that all communications by post should be prepaid.

NOTE.—A. POPINOT also supplies essences and pharmaceutical preparations, such as neroli, oil of spike-lavender, oil of sweet almonds, cacao-butter, cafeine, castor oil, "et cætera."

"My dear fellow," said the Illustrious Gaudissart, addressing Finot, "it is perfectly written! Ye gods, how we plunge into deep science! No shuffling; we go straight to the point! Ah! I congratulate you heartily; there is literature of some practical use!"

"A fine prospectus!" cried Popinot enthusiastically.

"The very first sentence is a deathblow to Macassar," said Gaudissart, rising to his feet with a magisterial air, to pro-

claim with an oratorical gesture between each word, "'You—cannot—make—hair—grow. It—cannot—be—dyed—without—danger!' Aha! success lies in that. Modern science corroborates the custom of the ancients. You can suit yourself to old and young. You have to do with an old man.—Aha, sir! the Greeks and Romans, the ancients, were in the right; they were not such fools as some would make them out to be! Or if it is a young man.—My dear fellow, another discovery due to the progress of enlightenment; we are progressing. What must we not expect from steam, and the telegraph, and such like inventions? This oil is the outcome of M. Vauquelin's investigations!—How if we were to print an extract from M. Vauquelin's paper, eh? Capital! Come, Finot, draw up your chair! Let us stow the victuals, and tipple down the champagne to our young friend's success!"

"It seemed to me," said the author modestly, "that the time for the light and playful prospectus has gone by; we are entering on an epoch of science, and must talk learnedly and authoritatively to make an impression on the public."

"We will push the oil. My feet, and my tongue too, are hankering to go. I have agencies for all the houses that deal in hairdressers' goods, not one of them gives more than thirty per cent of discount; make up your mind to give forty, and I will engage to sell a hundred thousand bottles in six months. I will make a set on all the druggists, grocers, and hairdressers! And if you will allow them forty per cent on your oil, they will all send their customers wild for it."

The three young men ate like lions, drank like Swiss, and waxed merry over the future success of the Cephalic Oil.

"This oil goes to your head," said Finot, smiling, and Gaudissart exhausted whole series of puns on the words, oil, head, and hair.

In the midst of their Homeric laughter over the dessert, the knocker sounded, and in spite of the toasts and the wishes for luck exchanged among the three friends, they heard it.

"It is my uncle! He is capable of coming to see me," cried Popinot.

"An uncle?" asked Finot, "and we have not a glass!"

"My friend Popinot's uncle is an examining magistrate," said Gaudissart, by way of reply to Finot; "there is no occasion to hoax him, he saved my life. Ah! if you had found yourself in the fix I was in, with the scaffold staring you in the face, where, *kouik,* off goes your hair for good!" (and he imitated the fatal knife by a gesture), "you would be apt to remember the righteous judge to whom you owe the preservation of the channel that the champagne goes down! You would remember him if you were dead drunk. You don't know, Finot, but what you may want M. Popinot one day. *Saquerlotte!* You must make your bow to him, and thirteen to the dozen!"

It was, as a matter of fact, the "righteous judge," who was asking for his nephew of the woman who opened the door. Anselme recognized the voice, and went down, candle in hand, to light his way.

"Good-evening, gentlemen," said the magistrate.

The Illustrious Gaudissart made a profound bow. Finot looked the newcomer over with drunken eyes, and decided that Popinot's uncle was tolerably woodenheaded.

"There is no luxury here," said the judge, gravely looking round the room; "but, my boy, you must begin by being nothing if you are to be something great."

"How profound he is!" said Gaudissart, turning to Finot.

"An idea for an article," said the journalist.

"Oh! is that you, sir?" said the judge, recognizing the commercial traveler. "Eh! what are you doing here?"

"I want to do all my little part, sir, towards making your dear nephew's fortune. We have just been pondering over the prospectus for this oil of his, and this gentleman here is the author of the prospectus, which seems to us to be one of the finest things in the literature of periwigs."

The judge looked at Finot.

"This gentleman is M. Andoche Finot," Gaudissart said,

"one of the most distinguished young men in literature; he does political leaders and the minor theatres for the Government newspapers; he is a Minister who is by way of being an author."

Here Finot tugged at Gaudissart's coat-tails.

"Very well, boys," said the judge, to whom these words explained the appearance of the table covered with the remnants of a feast very excusable under the circumstances.

"As for you, Anselme," he continued, turning to Popinot, "get ready to pay a visit to M. Birotteau; I must go to see him this evening. You will sign your deed of partnership; I have gone through it very carefully. As you are going to manufacture your oil in the Faubourg du Temple, I think that he ought to make over the lease of the workshop to you, and that he has power to sublet; if things are all in order, it will save disputes afterwards. These walls look to me to be very damp, Anselme; bring up trusses of straw, and put them round about where your bed stands."

"Excuse me, sir," said Gaudissart with a courtier's suppleness, "we have just put up the wall-paper ourselves to-day, and—it—is—not quite dry."

"Economy! good!" said the judge.

"Listen," said Gaudissart in Finot's ear; "my friend Popinot is a good young man; he is going off with his uncle, so come along and let us finish the evening with our fair cousins."

The journalist turned out the lining of his waistcoat pocket. Popinot saw the manœuvre, and slipped a twenty-franc piece into the hand of the author of his prospectus. The judge had a cab waiting at the corner of the street, and carried off his nephew to call on Birotteau.

Pillerault, M. and Mme. Ragon, and Roguin were playing at boston, and Césarine was embroidering a fichu, when the elder Popinot and Anselme appeared. Roguin, sitting opposite Mme. Ragon, could watch Césarine, who sat by her side, and saw the happy look on the girl's face when Anselme came in, saw her flush up red as a pomegranate

flower, and called his head-clerk's attention to her by a significant gesture.

"So this is to be a day of deeds, is it?" said the perfumer, when greetings had been exchanged, and the judge explained the reason of the visit.

César, Anselme, and the judge went up to the perfumer's temporary quarters on the second floor to debate the matter of the lease and the deed of partnership drawn up by the elder Popinot. It was arranged that the lease should run for eighteen years, so as to be conterminous with the lease of the house in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants; trifling matter as it appeared at the time, it was destined later to serve Birotteau's interests.

When they returned to the sitting-room, the elder Popinot, surprised by the confusion and the men at work on a Sunday in the house of so devout a man, asked the reason of it all. This was the question for which César was waiting.

"Although you are not worldly, sir, you will not object to our celebrating our deliverance; and that is not all—if we are arranging for a little gathering of our friends, it is partly also to celebrate my promotion to the order of the Legion of Honor."

"Ah!" said the examining magistrate (who had not been decorated).

"It may be that I have shown myself not unworthy of this signal mark of Royal favor by discharging my functions at the Tribunal . . . oh! I mean to say Consular Tribunal, and by fighting for the Royalist cause on the steps——"

"Yes," said the magistrate.

"Steps of Saint-Roch, on the 13th of Vendémiaire, where I was wounded by Napoleon."

"I shall be glad to come," said M. Popinot; "and if my wife is well enough, I will bring her."

"Xandrot," said Roguin, on the doorstep, "give up all

thoughts of marrying Césarine; in six weeks' time you will see that I have given you sound counsel."

"Why?" asked Crottat.

"My dear fellow, Birotteau is about to spend a hundred thousand francs over this ball of his, and he is embarking his whole fortune, against my advice, in this building-land scheme. In six weeks' time these people will not have bread to eat. Marry Mlle. Lourdois, the house-painter's daughter; she has three hundred thousand francs to her fortune. I have planned this shift for you. If you will pay me down the money, you can have my practice to-morrow for a hundred thousand francs."

The splendors of the perfumer's forthcoming ball, announced to Europe by the newspapers, were very differently announced in commercial circles by flying rumors of workpeople employed night and day on the perfumer's house. The rumors took various forms; here is was said that César had taken the house on either side; there, that his drawing-rooms were to be gilded; some said that no tradespeople would be invited, and that the ball was given to Government officials only; and the perfumer was severely blamed for his ambition; they scoffed at his political aspirations, they denied that he had been wounded! More than one scheme was set on foot, in the second arrondissement, in consequence of the ball; the friends of the family took things quietly, but the claims of distant acquaintances were vast.

Those who have favor to bestow, never lack courtiers; and a goodly number of the guests were at no little pains to procure their cards of admission. The Birotteaus were amazed to find so many friends whose existence they had not suspected. This eagerness on their part alarmed Mme. Birotteau; she looked more and more gloomy as the days went by and the solemn festival came nearer. She had confessed to César from the very first that she should not know how to act her part as hostess, and the innumerable small details frightened her. Where was the plate to come from?

How about the glass, the refreshments, the forks and spoons? And who would look after it all?—She begged Birotteau to stand near the door and see that no one came who had not been asked to the ball; she had heard strange things about people who came to dances claiming acquaintance with people whom they did not know by name.

One evening, ten days before the famous Sunday, Messieurs Braschon, Grindot, Lourdois, and Chaffaroux the contractor having given their word that the rooms should be ready for the 17th of December, there had been a laughable conference after dinner in the humble little sitting-room on the mezzanine floor—César and his wife and daughter were making a list of guests and writing the cards of invitation, which had been sent in only that morning, nicely printed in the English fashion on rose-colored paper, in accordance with the precepts laid down in the *Complete Guide to Etiquette.*

"Look here!" said César; "we must not leave anybody out."

"If we forget any one," remarked Constance, "we shall be reminded of it. Mme. Derville, who never called upon us before, sailed in yesterday evening in great state."

"She was very pretty; I liked her," said Césarine.

"Yet before she was married she was even worse off than I," said Constance; "she used to do plain needlework in the Rue Montmartre; she has made shirts for your father."

"Well, let us put the great people down at the top of the list," said César. "Write 'M. le Duc and Mme. la Duchesse de Lenoncourt,' Césarine."

"Goodness! César," cried Constance, "pray don't begin to send invitations to people whom you only know through the business. Are you going to ask the Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry? She is more nearly related to your late godmother, the Marquise d'Uxelles, than even the Duc de Lenoncourt. And shall you ask the two MM. Vandenesse, M. de Marsay, M. de Ronquerolles, M. d'Aiglemont; in short, all your customers? You are mad; honors are turning your head——"

"Yes! but M. le Comte de Fontaine and his family. Eh? He used to come to the *Queen of Roses* under the name of *Grand-Jacques* with the *Gars* (M. le Marquis de Montauran that was) and M. de la Billardière, whom they called the *Nantais* in the days before the great affair of the 13th of Vendémiaire. And they would shake hands with you then, and it was, 'My dear Birotteau, keep your heart up, and give your life, like the rest of us, for the good cause!' We are old fellow-conspirators."

"Put him down," said Constance; "if M. de la Billardière and his son are coming, they must have somebody to speak to."

"Set down his name, Césarine," said Birotteau.—"*Imprimis,* His Worship the Prefect of the Seine; he may or may not come, but he is the head of the municipal corporation, and 'honor to whom honor is due.'—M. de la Billardière, the mayor, and his son. (Write down the number of the people after every name.)—My colleague, M. Granet, and his wife. She is very ugly, but, all the same, we cannot leave her out.—M. Curel, the goldsmith, Colonel of the National Guard, and his wife and two daughters. Those are what I call the authorities. Now for the bigwigs!—M. le Comte and Mme. la Comtesse de Fontaine and their daughter, Mlle. Émilie de Fontaine."

"An insolent girl, who makes me come out of the shop to speak to her at her carriage door in all weathers," said Mme. César. "If she comes at all, it will be to make fun of us."

"In that case, perhaps she will come," said César, who meant to fill his rooms at all costs. "Go on, Césarine—M. le Comte and Mme. la Comtesse de Granville, my landlord, the hardest head in the Court of Appeal, Derville says.—Oh! by the by, M. de la Billardière has arranged for me to be presented to-morrow by M. le Comte de Lacépède himself; it is only polite to ask the Grand Chancellor to dinner and to the ball.—M. Vauquelin. Put him down for the dinner and for the ball too, Césarine. And, while we

remember it, all the Chiffrevilles and the Protez family. —M. Popinot, judge of the Tribunal of the Seine, and Mme. Popinot.—M. and Mme. Thirion, he is an usher of the Privy Chamber, and a friend of the Ragons; it is said that their daughter is to be married to one of M. Camusot's sons by his first marriage."

"César, do not forget young Horace Bianchon; he is M. Popinot's nephew and Anselme's cousin," put in Constance.

"Ah, to be sure! Césarine has put a figure four very plainly after the Popinots.—M. and Mme. Rabourdin; M. Rabourdin is at the head of one of the departments in M. de la Billardière's division.—M. Cochin of the same department, and his wife and son; they are sleeping-partners in M. Matifat's concern; and while we are about it, put down M. and Mme. and Mlle. Matifat."

"The Matifats have been making overtures for their friends, M. and Mme. Colleville, M. and Mme. Thuillier, and the Saillards."

"We shall see," said César. "Our stockbroker, M. Jules Desmarets and his wife."

"She will be the prettiest woman in the room!" cried Césarine. "I like her, oh! more than any one!"

"Derville and his wife."

"Just put down M. and Mme. Coquelin, who took over uncle Pillerault's business," said Constance. "They made so sure of being asked, that the poor little thing is having a grand ball-dress made by my dressmaker—a white satin overskirt covered with tulle, embroidered with blue chicory flowers. It would not have taken much to persuade her to have a gold embroidered court-dress. If we left them out, we should make two bitter enemies."

"Put them down, Césarine; we must show our respect for trade, for we are tradespeople ourselves.—M. and Mme. Roguin."

"Mamma, Mme. Roguin will wear her *rivière,* all her diamonds, and her Mechlin lace gown."

"M. and Mme. Lebas," César continued.—"And next,

the President of the Tribunal of Commerce and his wife and two daughters (I forgot to put them among the authorities).—M. and Mme. Lourdois and their daughter.—M. Claparon the banker; M. du Tillet, M. Grindot, M. Molineux; Pillerault and his landlord; M. and Mme. Camusot, the rich silk mercer, and all their family, the one at the École polytechnique and the advocate; he will receive an appointment as judge—he is the one that is engaged to be married to Mlle. Thirion."

"It will only be a Provincial appointment," said Césarine.

"M. Cardot, Camusot's father-in-law, and all the young Cardots. Stay! there are the Guillaumes in the Rue du Colombier, Lebas' wife's people, two old folk who will be wall-flowers.—Alexandre Crottat,—Célestin——"

"Papa, do not forget M. Andoche Finot and M. Gaudissart, two young men who have been so useful to M. Anselme."

"Gaudissart? He got himself into trouble. But, never mind, he is going away in a few days, and will travel for our oil,—so put him down! As for Master Andoche Finot, what is he to us?"

"M. Anselme says that he will be a great man; he is as clever as Voltaire."

"An author is he? They are all of them atheists."

"Put him down, papa; so far there are not so very many men who dance. Besides, your nice prospectus for the oil was his doing."

"He believes in our oil, does he?" said César. "Put him down, dear child."

"So I too have my protégés on the list," commented Césarine.

"Put M. Mitral, my process-server, and our doctor, M. Haudry; it is for form's sake, he will not come.

"He will come for his game of cards," said Césarine.

"Ah! by the by, César, I hope that you will ask M. l'Abbé Loraux to dinner!"

"I have written to him already," said César.

"Oh! we must not forget Lebas' sister-in-law, Mme. Au-

gustine de Sommervieux," said Césarine. "Poor little thing! she is very unwell; Lebas said that she was dying of grief."

"See what comes of marrying an artist," cried the perfumer.—"Just look at your mother; she has fallen asleep," he said, in a low voice, to his daughter. "Bye-bye—sleep softly, Madame César.—Well, now," said César, turning to his daughter, "how about your mother's dress?"

"Yes, papa, everything will be ready. Mamma thinks that she is to have a Canton crape gown like mine, and the dressmaker is sure that there is no need to try it on."

"How many are there altogether?" César went on aloud, as his wife opened her eyes.

"A hundred and nine, with the assistants," said Césarine.

"Where are we going to put all those people?" asked Mme. Birotteau. "And when all is over, after the Sunday comes Monday," she said naïvely.

Nothing can be done simply when people aspire to rise from one social rank to another. Neither Mme. Birotteau, nor César, nor any one else might venture on any pretext whatsoever on to the first floor. César had promised the errand-boy Raguet a new suit of clothes if he kept watch faithfully and carried out his orders properly. Like the Emperor Napoleon at Compiègne, when he had the Château restored for his marriage with Marie-Louise of Austria, Birotteau wanted to see nothing till the whole was finished; he meant to enjoy "the surprise." So all unconsciously the old enemies met, this time not on the field of battle, but on the common ground of bourgeois vanity. M. Grindot was to take César over the new rooms like a cicerone exhibiting a gallery to a tourist.

Every one in the house, moreover, had his or her own "surprise." Césarine, the dear child, had spent a hundred louis, all her little hoard, on books for her father. M. Grindot had confided to her one morning that there were two fitted bookcases in her father's room, which was to be a study; this was the architect's surprise; and Césarine spent all her

savings with a bookseller. She had bought the works of Bossuet, Racine, Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Molière, Buffon, Fénelon, Delille, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, La Fontaine, Corneille, Pascal, and La Harpe; in short, the ordinary collection of classics to be seen everywhere, books which her father would never read. A terrible bookbinder's bill must of necessity be the result. Thouvenin, that great and unpunctual artist and binder, had undertaken to send the books home on the 18th at midday. Césarine had told her uncle in confidence of her difficulty, and he had undertaken the bill. César's surprise for his wife took the shape of a cherry-colored velvet gown trimmed with lace; it was of this dress that he had just spoken to the daughter, who had been his accomplice. Mme. Birotteau's surprise for the new Chevalier of Honor consisted of a pair of gold buckles and a solitaire pin. Finally, there was the surprise of the new rooms for the whole family, to be followed in a fortnight by the great surprise of the bills to be paid.

After mature reflection, César decided that some of the invitations must be given in person, and some might be delivered by Raguet in the evening. He took a cab and handed his wife into it (his wife, whose beauty suffered a temporary eclipse from a hat and feathers and the last new shawl, the cashmere shawl for which she had longed for fifteen years), and away went the perfumers dressed in their best to acquit themselves of twenty-two calls in a morning.

César spared his wife the difficulties attendant on straining the resources of a bourgeois household to prepare the various confections which the splendor of the occasion demanded. A treaty was arranged between Birotteau and the great Chevet. Chevet would furnish the dinner and the wines; he would provide a splendid service of plate (which brings in as much as an estate to its owner), and a retinue of servants under the command of a sufficiently imposing *maître d'hôtel*, all of them responsible for their sayings and doings. Chevet was to take up his quarters in the kitchen

and dining-room on the mezzanine floor, and not to quit possession until he had served up a dinner for twenty persons at six o'clock, and a grand collation an hour after midnight. The ices, to be served in pretty cups with silver-gilt spoons on silver trays, would be supplied by Foy's Café, and the refreshments by Tanrade—an added lustre to the feast.

"Be easy," César said to his wife, who looked somewhat over-anxious on the day before the great day. "Chevet, Tanrade, and the people from Foy's Café will occupy the mezzanine floor, Virginie will be on guard above, and the shop shall be shut up. There is nothing left for us to do but to strut about on the first floor."

On the 16th, at two o'clock, M. de la Billardière came for César. They were to go together to the Chancellerie de la Légion d'honneur, where Birotteau, with some ten others, was to be received as a Chevalier by M. le Comte de Lacépède. The perfumer had tears in his eyes when the mayor came for him; the surprise which Constance had planned had just taken place, and César had been presented with the gold buckles and solitaire.

"It is very sweet to be so loved," said he, as he stepped into the cab; Constance and Césarine standing on the threshold, and the assistants gathered in a group to see him go. All of them gazed at César in his silk stockings and black silk breeches, and the new coat of cornflower blue on which the ribbon was about to blaze—the red ribbon which, according to Molineux, had been steeped in blood.

When César came back at dinner-time, he was pale with joy. He looked at his Cross in every looking-glass, for in his first intoxication he could not be content to wear the ribbon only; there was no tinge of false modesty about his elation.

"The Grand Chancellor is charming, dear," said he; "at a word from M. de la Billardière, he accepted my invitation; he is coming with M. Vauquelin. M. de Lacépède is a great man, yes, as great as M. Vauquelin. He has written forty

volumes. And then he is a peer of France as well as an author. We must not forget to say 'Your Lordship,' or 'M. le Comte,' when we address him."

"Do eat your dinner," remarked his wife.—"Your father is worse than a child," Constance added, looking at Césarine.

"How nice that looks at your button-hole!" said Césarine. "They will present arms when you pass; we will go out together!"

"All the sentries will present arms to me."

Grindot and Braschon came downstairs as he spoke. "After dinner, sir, you and madame and mademoiselle may like to look over the rooms; Braschon's foreman is just putting up a few curtain brackets, and three men are lighting the candles."

"You will need a hundred and twenty candles," said Braschon.

"A bill for two hundred francs from Trudon," began Mme. César, but a look from the Chevalier checked her lamentations.

"Your fête will be magnificent, M. le Chevalier," put in Braschon.

"Flatterers already!" César thought within himself. "The Abbé Loraux enjoined it upon me not to fall into their snares, and to remain humble; I will keep my origin in mind."

But César did not understand the drift of the remark let fall by the rich upholsterer of the Rue Saint-Antoine. Braschon had made a dozen futile efforts to secure invitations for himself and his wife, his daughter, aunt, and mother-in-law. And so César made an enemy. On the threshold, Braschon did not call him again "M. le Chevalier."

Then came the private view. César and his wife and Césarine went out through the shop and came in from the street. The door had been reconstructed in a grand style, the two leaves were divided up into square panels, and in the centre of each panel was a cast-iron ornament, duly painted. This kind of door, which is now so common in Paris, was at that time the very newest thing. Beneath the double staircase in the vestibule, opposite the door, in the plinth which had

so disturbed César's mind, a sort of box had been contrived where an old woman could be ensconced. The vestibule, with its black-and-white marble floor, and its walls painted to look like marble, was lighted by a lamp of antique pattern, with four sockets for the wicks. The architect had combined a rich effect with apparent simplicity. A narrow crimson carpet relieved the whiteness of the stone. The first landing gave access to the mezzanine floor. The door on the staircase, which gave access to the first-floor rooms, was in the same style as the street door, but this was a piece of cabinet work.

"How charming!" said Césarine. "And yet there is nothing which catches the eye."

"Exactly, mademoiselle, the effect is produced by the exact proportions of the stylobates, the plinths, the cornice, and the ornaments; and then I have not employed gilding anywhere; the colors are subdued, and there are no glaring tones."

"It is a science," said Césarine.

Then they entered the ante-room; it was simple, spacious, and tastefully decorated; a parquet floor had been laid down. The drawing-room was lighted by three windows, which looked upon the street; here the colors were white and red; the outlines of the cornices were delicate, so was the paint; there was nothing to dazzle the eyes. The ornaments on the mantel-shelf, of white marble supported on white marble columns, had been carefully chosen; there was nothing tawdry about them, and they were in keeping with the details of the furniture. In fact, throughout the room a subtle harmony prevailed, such as none but an artist can establish, by subordinating everything, down to the least accessories, to the general scheme of decoration; a harmony which strikes the philistine, though he cannot account for it. The light of twenty-four wax candles in the chandelier displayed the glories of the crimson silk curtains; the parquet floor tempted Césarine to dance. Through a green-and-white boudoir they reached César's study.

"I have put a bed here," said Grindot, throwing open the doors of an alcove, cleverly concealed between the two book-

cases. "Either you or Mme. Birotteau may fall ill, and an invalid requires a separate room."

"But the bookcase is full of bound books! . . . Oh! wife, wife!" cried César.

"No, this is Césarine's surprise."

"Pardon a father's emotion," exclaimed Birotteau, embracing his daughter.

"Of course, of course, sir," said Grindot. "You are in your own house."

The prevailing tone of the study was brown, relieved by green; for by skilful modulations all the rooms were brought into harmony with each other. Thus the prevailing color of one room was more sparingly introduced as a subsidiary in another, and *vice versâ*. The print of *Hero and Leander* shone conspicuous from a panel in César's new sanctum.

"And *you* are to pay for all this?" César said merrily.

"That beautiful engraving is M. Anselme's gift to you," said Césarine.

(Anselme, like the others, had managed to afford his surprise.)

"Poor boy! he has done as I did for M. Vauquelin."

Mme. Birotteau's room came next in order. Here the architect had lavished splendors to please the good folk whom he wished to use to his own ends. He had promised to make a study of this redecoration, and he had kept his word. The room was hung with blue silk, but the cords and tassels were white; while the furniture, covered with white cashmere, was relieved with blue. The clock on the white marble chimney-piece took the form of a marble slab, on which Venus reclined. The pretty Wilton carpet, of Eastern design, was the keynote of Césarine's apartment, a dainty little bedroom hung with chintz; there stood her piano, a pretty wardrobe with a mirror in it, a small white bed with plain curtains, and all the little possessions that girls love.

The dining-room lay behind César's study and the blue-and-white bedroom, and was entered by a door on the staircase. Here the decorations were in the style known as Louis XIV.

The sideboards were inlaid with brass and tortoise-shell; there was a Boule clock, and the walls were hung with stuffs and adorned with gilt studs.

No words can describe the joy of these three human beings, which reached its height when Mme. Birotteau, returning to her room, found her new dress lying there on the bed; the cherry-colored velvet gown, trimmed with lace, which her husband had given her. Virginie had stolen in on tiptoe to lay it there.

"The rooms do you great credit, sir," Constance said, addressing Grindot. "More than a hundred people will be here to-morrow evening, and you will be complimented by everybody."

"I shall recommend you," said César. "You will meet all the first-rate people, and you will be better known in a single evening than if you had built a hundred houses."

Constance, touched by what had happened, no longer thought of the expense or of criticising her husband, and for the following reasons. That morning, when Popinot had brought the *Hero and Leander,* he had assured her that the Cephalic Oil would be a success. Constance had always had a high opinion of Popinot's abilities and intelligence, and Popinot was working with unheard-of enthusiasm. The money lavished by Birotteau on these extravagances might amount to a good round sum, but the young lover had promised that, in six months' time, Birotteau's share of the profits on the sales of the oil would cover them. After nineteen years of apprehension, it was so sweet to put doubts aside for a single day; and Constance promised her daughter that she would not spoil her husband's joy by any afterthought, but would give herself up entirely to gladness. So when M. Grindot left them about eleven o'clock, she flung her arms about her husband's neck and shed a few tears of joy.

"Ah, César," she said, "you make me very silly and very happy."

"If it will only last, you mean, do you not?" César asked, smiling.

"It will last; I have no fear now," said Mme. César.

"That is right; you appreciate me at last."

Those who have sufficient greatness of character to know their weaknesses will confess that a poor orphan girl who, eighteen years ago, had been earning her living behind the counter of the *Little Sailor* in the Ile Saint-Louis, and a poor peasant lad who had come on foot from Touraine, stick in hand and with hobnailed shoes on his feet, might well feel gratified and happy to give such a fête on an occasion so much to their credit.

"*Mon Dieu,* I would willingly give a hundred francs for a visitor," cried César.

"M. l'Abbé Loraux," announced Virginie, and the Abbé appeared. The priest was at this time curate of Saint-Sulpice. Never has the power of the soul been more plainly revealed than in this reverend ecclesiastic, who left a profound impression on the minds of all those with whom he came in contact. The exercise of Catholic virtues had given sublimity to a harsh face, almost repellent in its ugliness; it was as if something of the light of heaven shone from it before the time. The influences of a simple and sincere life, passing into the blood, had modified those rugged features, the fires of charity had chastened their uncouth outlines. In Claparon's case, the nature of the man had stamped itself on his face and degraded and brutalized it, but here the grace of the three fair human virtues, Hope, Faith, and Charity, hovered about the wrinkled lines. There was a penetrating power in his words, slowly and gently spoken. He dressed like other priests in Paris, and allowed himself a chestnut-brown overcoat. No trace of ambition had sullied the pure heart, which the angels would surely bear to God in its primitive innocence; it had required all the kindly urgency of the daughter of Louis XVI. to induce the Abbé Loraux to accept a benefice in Paris, and then he had taken one of the poorest.

Just now he looked somewhat disquieted as he surveyed all

these splendors; he smiled at the three before him, and shook his head.

"Children," he said, "it is my part to comfort those that mourn, and not to be present at festivals. I have come to thank M. César and to congratulate you. There is only one festival that will bring me here—the marriage of this pretty maid."

A quarter of an hour later the Abbé took his leave, and neither César nor his wife had dared to show him the new arrangements. The sober apparition threw a few drops of cold water on César's joyous ebullitions.

They slept that night amid the new glories, each taking possession of the little luxuries and pretty furniture for which they had longed. Césarine helped her mother to undress before the mirror of the white marble toilet table; César was fain to use his newly-acquired superfluities at once; and the heads of all the three were filled with visions of the joys of the morrow.

The next day, at four o'clock, they had been to mass, and had read vespers; the mezzanine floor had been delivered over to the secular arm, in the shape of Chevet's people, and Césarine and her mother betook themselves to their toilets. Never was costume more becoming to Mme. César than the cherry-colored velvet gown with the lace about it, the short sleeves adorned with lappets; the rich stuff and the glowing color set off the youthful freshness of her shapely arms, the dazzling whiteness of her skin, the gracious outlines of her neck and shoulders. The naïve happiness felt by every woman when she is conscious that she looks at her best lent a vague sweetness to Mme. Birotteau's Grecian profile; and the outlines of her face, finely cut as a cameo, appeared in all their delicate beauty. Césarine, in her white crape dress, with a wreath of white roses in her hair, and a rose at her waist, her shoulders and the outlines of her bodice modestly covered by a scarf, turned Popinot's head.

"These people are eclipsing us," said Mme. Roguin to her husband, as she went through the rooms.

The notary's wife was furious. A woman can always measure the superiority or inferiority of a rival, and Mme. Roguin felt that she was not as beautiful as Mme. César.

"Pooh, not for long. In a little while the poor thing will be ruined, and your carriage will splash the mud on her as she goes afoot through the streets."

Vauquelin's manner was perfect. He came with M. de Lacépède, who had brought his colleague in his carriage. To Mme. César, in her radiant beauty, the two learned Academicians paid compliments in scientific language.

"You possess the secret, unknown to chemistry, of retaining youth and beauty, madame."

"You are in your own house, so to speak, M. l'Académicien," said Birotteau.—"Yes, M. le Comte," he went on, turning to the Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honor, "I owe my success to M. Vauquelin. I have the honor of presenting to your lordship M. le Président (of the Tribunal of Commerce).—That is M. le Comte de Lacépède, a peer of France, and one of the greatest men in France besides; he has written forty volumes," he added, for the benefit of Joseph Lebas, who came with the President.

The guests were punctual. The ordinary tradesman's dinner party followed, abundant in good humor and merriment, and enlivened by the homely jokes that never fail to provoke laughter. Ample justice was done to the excellent dishes, and the wines were thoroughly appreciated. It was half-past nine before they went into the drawing-room for coffee, and cabs had already begun to arrive with impatient dancers. An hour later, the rooms were full, and the dance had become a crush. M. de Lacépède and M. Vauquelin went, in spite of entreaties from César, who followed them despairingly to the staircase. He had better fortune with the elder Popinot and M. de la Billardière, who remained.

With the exception of three women, Mlle. Fontaine, Mme. Jules, and Mme. Rabourdin, who severally represented aristocracy, finance, and official dignities, and by their brilliant beauty, dress, and manner presented a striking contrast to the

rest of the assembly, the toilettes of the remainder were of the heavy and substantial order, too suggestive of a well-lined purse, which gives to a crowd of citizens' wives and daughters a certain air of vulgarity, made cruelly prominent in the present case by the daintiness and grace of the three ladies.

The bourgeoisie of the Rue Saint-Denis displayed itself majestically in the full glory of its absurdities carried to the burlesque point. It was that same bourgeoisie, nor more nor less, which tricks its offspring out in the uniform of the Lancers or of the National Guard, that buys *Victories and Conquests, The Old Soldier at the Plough,* and admires *The Pauper's Funeral,* which rejoices to go on Guard, goes on Sundays to the inevitable country house, is at pains to acquire a distinguished air, and dreams of municipal honors; the bourgeoisie that looks on every one with jealous eyes, and yet is kindly, helpful, devoted, warm-hearted, and compassionate, ready to subscribe for the orphan children of a General Foy, for the Greeks (all unwitting of their piracies), for the Champ d'Asile when it no longer exists; a bourgeoisie that falls a victim to its own good qualities, and is flouted by a social superiority which marks a real inferiority, for an ignorance of social conventions fosters that native kindliness of heart; a bourgeoisie which brings up frank-hearted daughters inured to work, full of good qualities, which are lost at once if they mingle with the classes above them; a common-sense, matter-of-fact womankind, from among whom the worthy Chrysale should have taken a wife; that bourgeoisie, in short, so admirably represented by the Matifats, the druggists in the Rue des Lombards, who had supplied the *Queen of Roses* for sixty years.

Mme. Matifat, anxious to appear stately, wore a turban on her head, and was dancing in a heavy poppy-red gown embroidered with gold, a toilette that harmonized with a haughty countenance, a Roman nose, and the splendors of a crimson complexion. Even M. Matifat, so glorious when the National Guard was reviewed, when you might see the chain and bunch of seals blazing on his portly person fifty paces away, was ob-

scured by this Catherine II. of the counting-house; yet her short, stout, spectacled consort, with his shirt collar almost up to his ears, distinguished himself by his deep bass voice and by the richness of his vocabulary.

He never said "Corneille," but "the sublime Corneille." Racine was the "tender Racine"; Voltaire, oh! Voltaire, "takes the second place in every class, more of a wit than a genius, but nevertheless a man of genius!" Rousseau, "a gloomy, suspicious nature, a man over-brimming with pride, who ended by hanging himself." He related tedious stock anecdotes about Piron, who is looked upon as a prodigious personage among the bourgeoisie. There was a slight tendency to obscenity in Matifat's conversation; he was an infatuated admirer of theatrical divinities; and it was even said of him that, in imitation of old Cardot and the wealthy Camusot, he kept a mistress. Now and then Mme. Matifat would hastily interrupt him on the brink of an anecdote by crying, at the top of her voice, "Mind what you are going to tell us, old man!" In familiar conversation she always addressed him as "old man." The voluminous lady of the Rue des Lombards caused Mlle. de Fontaine's aristocratic countenance to lose its repose; the haughty damsel could not help smiling when she overheard Mme. Matifat say to her husband, "Don't make a rush for the ices, old man; it is bad style!"

It is harder to explain the differences which distinguish the great world from the bourgeoisie than it is for the bourgeoisie to efface them. The women, conscious of their toilettes, felt that this was a holiday; they made no attempt to conceal an enjoyment which plainly showed that this ball was a great event in their busy lives; while the three women, each of whom represented a different higher social sphere, were at that moment as they would be on the morrow. They did not seem to be dressed for the occasion, had no desire to behold themselves amid the unaccustomed marvels of their costume, and showed no uneasiness as to its effect, which they had ascertained once and for all as they put the last touches to their ball dresses before the mirror; there was no excitement

in their faces; they danced with the grace and ease of movement which the forgotten sculptors of a bygone age caught and recorded in their statues. But the others bore the impress of daily toil, toil showed itself in their attitude, in their exaggerated enjoyment; their glances were naïvely curious, their voices were not subdued to the key of the low murmur which gives such an inimitable piquancy to ballroom conversation; and, above all things, they lacked the impertinent gravity which contains the germ of epigram, the repose of manner which marks those whose self-command is perfect. So Mme. Rabourdin, Mme. Jules, and Mlle. de Fontaine, who had expected infinite amusement from this perfumer's ball, stood out against the background of citizens' wives and daughters, conspicuous by their languid grace, by the exquisite taste displayed in their toilettes, and by their manner of dancing, even as three principal performers at the Opéra are set off by the rank and file of supernumeraries on the stage. Jealous and astonished eyes watched them. Mme. Roguin, Constance, and Césarine formed a link, as it were, between these three aristocratic types and the tradesmen's womankind.

At every ball a moment comes when excitement, or the torrents of light, the gaiety, the music, and the movement of the dance carries away the dancers, and all the shades of difference are drowned in the *crescendo* of the *tutti*. In a little while the ball would become a romp. Mlle. de Fontaine determined to go; but as she sought the venerable Vendean leader's arm, Birotteau and his wife and daughter hastened to prevent the defection of the aristocracy of their assembly.

"There is a perfume of good taste about the rooms which really surprises me; I congratulate you upon it," said the insolent girl, addressing the perfumer.

Birotteau was too much intoxicated by the compliments publicly addressed to him to understand this speech; but his wife flushed up, and did not know what to answer.

"This is a national festival which does you honor," Camusot said.

"I have seldom seen so fine a ball," said M. de la Billardière, an official fib that cost him nothing.

Birotteau took all the congratulations seriously.

"What a charming sight, and how good the band is! Shall you often give us balls?" asked Mme. Lebas.

"What beautiful rooms! Did you plan them yourself?" inquired Mme. Desmarets, and César ventured on a lie, and allowed it to be thought that he was the originator of the scheme of decoration. Césarine, whose list of partners for the quadrilles was of course filled up, learned how much delicacy there was in Anselme's nature.

"If I only listened to my own wishes," he had said in her ear, as they rose from dinner, "I would entreat the favor of a quadrille with you, but my happiness would cost our self-love too dear."

Césarine, who thought all men who walked straight ungraceful in their gait, determined to open the ball with Popinot. Popinot, encouraged by his aunt, who had bade him be bold, dared to speak of his love during the quadrille to the charming girl at his side, but in the roundabout ways that timid lovers take.

"My fortune depends on you, mademoiselle "

"And how?"

"There is but one hope which can give me the power to make it."

"Then hope."

"Do you really know all that you have said in those two words?" asked Popinot.

"Hope for fortune," said Césarine, with a mischievous smile.

As soon as the quadrille was over, Anselme rushed to his friend. "Gaudissart! Gaudissart! succeed, or I shall blow my brains out." He squeezed his friend's arm in a Herculean grasp. "Success means that I shall marry Césarine. She has told me so; and see how beautiful she is!"

"Yes, she is prettily rigged out," said Gaudissart; "and she is rich. We will do her in oil."

The good understanding between Mlle. Lourdois and Alexandre Crottat (Roguin's successor-designate) did not escape Mme. Birotteau, who could not give up without a pang the prospect of seeing her daughter the wife of a Paris notary. Uncle Pillerault, after exchanging a greeting with little Molineux, took up his quarters in an easy-chair near the bookcase. Hence he watched the card-players, listened to the talk about him, and went from time to time to the door to look at the moving flower-garden as the dancers' heads swayed in the figures of the quadrille. He turned a truly philosophical countenance on it all. The men were unspeakable, with the exception of du Tillet, who had already learned something of the manners of the fashionable world; of young Billardière, an incipient dandy; M. Jules Desmarets, and the official personages. But among the faces, all more or less comical, which gave the assembly its character, there was one in particular, worn into meaningless smoothness like the head on a five-franc piece issued by the Republic, but curious by reason of its association with a suit of clothes. This person, it will have been guessed, was none other than the petty tyrant of the Cour Batave, arrayed in fine linen, yellowed with lying by in the press, displaying a shirt frill of venerable lace, secured by a pin with a bluish cameo. Short breeches of black silk treacherously revealed the spindle shanks on which he dared to repose his weight. César triumphantly took him round the four apartments devised by the architect on the first floor of his house.

"Hey! hey! it is your own affair, sir," said Molineux. "My first floor done up in this way will be worth another thousand crowns."

Birotteau turned this off with a joke, but the little old man's words and tone had been like the prick of a needle. "I shall soon have my first floor again; this man is ruining himself!"—that was the underlying sense of that *"will be worth,"* which had been a sudden revelation of Molineux's claws.

The pale, meagre face and cruel eyes struck du Tillet,

whose attention had been called to the landlord in the first instance by the watch-chain from which a pound weight of trinkets hung and jingled, the green coat with white threads in it, and the odd-looking, turned up collar, which gave the old man somewhat the appearance of a rattlesnake. So the banker went over to the little money-lender to learn how he came to be at a merry-making.

"Here, sir," said Molineux, putting a foot into the boudoir, "I am on M. le Comte Granville's property, but here" (he pointed to the other foot) "I am on my own, for this house belongs to me."

And Molineux, more than willing to gratify the only one who had a mind to listen to him, was so charmed with du Tillet's attentive attitude, that he described himself, and gave an account of his habits, together with a complete history of the sauciness of Master Gendrin, and an exact relation of his transactions with the perfumer, without which transaction the ball would not have taken place.

"Ah! so M. César has paid his rent beforehand," said du Tillet; "nothing is more contrary to his habits."

"Oh! I asked him to do so; I am so accommodating with my tenants!"

"If old Birotteau goes bankrupt," thought du Tillet, "that little rogue will certainly make a capital assignee. Such captiousness is not often met with; he must amuse himself at home, like Domitian, by killing flies when he is alone."

Du Tillet betook himself to the card-tables, where Claparon (by his orders) had already taken his post. Du Tillet thought that, screened by a lamp shade, at *bouillotte,* his dummy banker would escape all scrutiny. As they sat opposite one another, they looked such perfect strangers that the most suspicious observer could have discovered no sign of an understanding between them. Gaudissart, who knew that Claparon had risen in the world, did not dare to approach him; the wealthy ex-commercial traveler had given him the portentously cool stare of an upstart who does not care to be claimed by an old acquaintance.

Towards five o'clock in the morning the ball came to an end, like a spent rocket. By that time there only remained some forty cabs out of a hundred or more which had filled the Rue Saint-Honoré; and in the ballroom they were dancing the *boulangère,* which later was succeeded by the cotillon and the English galop. Du Tillet, Roguin, young Cardot, Jules Desmarets, and the Comte de Granville were playing *bouillotte.* Du Tillet had won three thousand francs. The light of the wax-candles was growing pale in the dawn when the card-players rose to join in the last quadrille.

In bourgeois houses this supreme enjoyment never comes to an end without some enormities. Those who imposed awe or restraint on the others are gone; the intoxication of movement, the hot rooms, the spirits that lurk in the most harmless beverages, relax the stiffness of the dowagers, who allow themselves to be drawn into the quadrilles, and yield to the excitement of the moment; men are heated, the lank hair comes down over their faces, and their grotesque appearance provokes laughter; the younger women grow frivolous, flowers have fallen here and there from their hair. Then it is that the bourgeois Momus enters, followed by his antic crew! Laughter breaks out in peals, and every one gives himself up to the merriment, thinking that with morning labor will resume its sway over him. Matifat was dancing with a woman's hat on his head; Célestin was indulging in burlesque movements. A few of the ladies clapped their hands noisily when they changed the figures of the intermidable quadrille.

"How they are enjoying themselves!" said the happy Birotteau.

"If only they break nothing," said Constance, who stood by Uncle Pillerault.

"You have given the most magnificent ball that I have seen, and I have seen many," said du Tillet, with a bow to his late employer.

There is in one of Beethoven's eight symphonies a fantasia like a great poem; it is the culminating point of the *finale*

of the Symphony in C minor. When, after the slow preparation of the mighty magician, so well understood by Habeneck, the rich curtain rises on this scene; when the bow of the enthusiastic leader of the orchestra calls forth the dazzling *motif*, through which the whole gathered force of the music flows, the poet, as his heart beats fast, will understand that this ball was in Birotteau's life like this moment when his own imagination feels the quickening power of the music, of this *motif*, which in itself perhaps raises the Symphony in C minor above its glorious sisters. For a radiant fairy springs up and waves her wand, and you hear the rustling of the purple silken curtains raised by angels; the golden doors, carved like the bronze gates of the Baptistery in Florence, turn upon their hinges of adamant, and your eyes wander over far-off glories and vistas of fairy palaces. Forms not of this earth glide among them, the incense of prosperity rises, the fire is kindled on the altar of fortune, the scented air circles about it. Beings clad in white blue-bordered tunics smile divinely as they float before your eyes, shapes delicate and ethereal beyond expression turn faces of unearthly beauty upon you. The Loves hover in the air, filling it with the flames of their torches. You feel that you are loved; you are glad with a joy that you drink in without comprehending it as you bathe in the floods of a torrent of harmony which pours out for each the nectar of his choice; for as the music slides into your inmost soul, its desires are realized for a moment. Then when you have walked for a while in heaven, the enchanter plunges you back, by some deep and mysterious transition of the bass, into the morass of chill reality, only to draw you thence when he has awakened in you a thirst for his divine melodies, and your soul cries out to hear those sounds again. The history of the soul at the most glorious point in that beautiful *finale* is the history of the sensations which this festival brought in abundance for Constance and César. But it was no Beethoven, but a Collinet, who had composed upon his flute the *finale* of their commercial symphony.

The three Birotteaus, tired but happy, slept that morning with the sounds of the festival ringing in their ears. The building, repairs, furniture, banquets, toilettes, and Césarine's library (for the money had been repaid to her) had altogether raised the expense of that entertainment, without César's having a suspicion of it, to sixty thousand francs. So much did that luckless red ribbon, fastened by the King to a perfumer's buttonhole, cost the wearer. If any misfortune should befall César Birotteau, this extravagance of his was like to bring him into serious trouble at the police court; a merchant lays himself open to a term of two years' imprisonment if, on examination, his expenses are considered excessive. It is, perhaps, more unpleasant to go to the Sixth Chamber for simple bad management or for a foolish trifle, than to come before a Court of Assize for a gigantic fraud; and in some people's eyes it is better to be a knave than a fool.

II.

CÉSAR STRUGGLES WITH MISFORTUNE

A WEEK after the ball, that final flare of the straw-fire of a prosperity which had lasted for eighteen years, and now was about to die out in darkness, César stood watching the passers-by through his shop window. He was thinking of the wide extent of his business affairs, and found them almost more than he could manage. Hitherto his life had been quite simple; he manufactured and sold his goods, or he bought to sell again. But now there was the speculation in building land, and his own share in the enterprise of A. Popinot & Company, besides a hundred and sixty thousand francs worth of bills to meet. Before long he would be compelled to discount some of his customers' bills (and his wife would not like it), or there must be an unheard-of success on Popinot's part; altogether, the poor man had so many things to think of that he felt as if he had more skeins to wind than he could hold.

How would Anselme steer his course? Birotteau treated Popinot much as a professor of rhetoric treats a student; he felt little confidence in his capacity, and was sorry that he could not be always on hand to look after him. The admonitory kick bestowed on Anselme's shins by way of a recommendation to hold his tongue in Vauquelin's presence will illustrate the fears which the perfumer felt as to the newly-started business. Birotteau was very careful to hide his thoughts from his wife and daughter, and from his assistant; but within himself he felt as a Seine boatman might feel if by some freak of fortune a Minister should give him the command of a frigate. Such thoughts as these, rising like a fog in his brain, were but little favorable to clear think-

ing, he stood, therefore, trying to see things distinctly in his own mind.

Just at that moment a figure, for which he felt an intense aversion, appeared in the street; he beheld his second landlord, little Molineux. Everybody knows those dreams in which events are so crowded together that we pass through a whole lifetime, dreams in which a fantastical being reappears from time to time, always as the bearer of bad tidings—the villain of the piece. It seemed to Birotteau that fate had sent Molineux to play a similar part in his waking life. That countenance had grinned diabolically at him when the feast was at its height, and had turned an evil eye on the splendor; and now when César saw it again, he remembered the impression which the "little curmudgeon" (to use his own expression) had given him but so much the more vividly, because Molineux had given him a fresh feeling of repulsion by suddenly breaking in upon his musings.

"Sir," said the little man in his vampire voice, "we did this business in such an offhand fashion, that you forgot to approve the additions to this little private covenant of ours."

As Birotteau took up the lease to repair the omission, the architect came in, bowed to the perfumer, and hovered about him with a diplomatic air.

"You know, sir, the difficulties at the outset when you are starting in business," he said at last in Birotteau's ear; "you are satisfied with me; you would oblige me very much by paying my honorarium at once."

Birotteau, who had paid away all his ready money and emptied his portfolio, told Célestin to draw a bill for two thousand francs at three months and a form of receipt.

"It is a very lucky thing for me that you undertook to pay the quarter which your next-door neighbor owed," said Molineux, with malicious cunning in his smile. "My porter has been round to tell me that the authorities have been affixing seals to his property, because Master Cayron had disappeared from the scene."

"If only they don't come down on me for the five thousand francs," thought Birotteau.

"People thought that he was doing very well," said Lourdois, who had just come in to hand his statement to the perfumer.

"No one in business is quite safe from reverses until he retires," remarked little Molineux, folding up his document with punctilious neatness.

The architect watched the little old creature with the pleasure that every artist feels at the sight of a living caricature which confirms his prejudices against the bourgeoisie.

"When you hold an umbrella over your head, you generally suppose that it is sheltered if it rains," he observed.

Molineux looked harder at the architect's moustache and "royale" than at his face, and the contempt that he felt for Grindot quite equaled Grindot's contempt for him. He stayed on to give the architect a parting scratch. By dint of living with his cats, there had come to be something feline in Molineux's ways as well as in his eyes.

Just at that moment, Ragon and Pillerault came in together.

"We have been talking over this business with the judge," Ragon said in César's ear. "He says that in a speculation of this kind we must actually complete the purchase and have a receipt from the vendors if we are really to be severally propriet——"

"Oh! are you in the affair of the Madeleine?" asked Lourdois. "People are talking about it; there will be houses to build!"

The house-painter had come to ask for a prompt settlement, but he found it to his interest not to press the perfumer.

"I have sent in my statement because it is the end of the year," he said in a low voice for César's benefit; "I do not want anything."

"Well, what is it, César?" asked Pillerault, noticing his

nephew's surprise; for César, overcome by the sight of the statement, made no answer to either Ragon or Lourdois.

"Oh! a trifle; I took five thousand francs of bills from a neighbor, the umbrella dealer, who is bankrupt. If he has given me bad paper, I shall be caught like a simpleton."

"Why, I told you so long ago," cried Ragon; "a drowning man will catch hold of his father's leg to save himself, and drag him down with him. I have seen so much of bankruptcies! A man is not exactly a rogue to begin with; but when he gets into trouble, he is forced to become one."

"True," said Pillerault.

"Ah! if I ever get as far as the Chamber of Deputies, or have some influence with Government . . ." said Birotteau, rising on tiptoe, and sinking back again on his heels.

"What will you do?" asked Lourdois. "You are a wise man."

Molineux, always interested by a discussion on law, stayed in the shop to listen; and as the attention paid by others is infectious, Pillerault and Ragon, who knew César's opinions, listened none the less with as much gravity as the three strangers.

"I should have a Tribunal and a permanent bench of judges," said César, "and a public prosecutor for criminal cases. After an examination, made by a judge who should discharge the functions of agents by procuration trustees and registrar, the trader should be declared *temporarily insolvent* or a *fraudulent bankrupt*. In the first case, he should be bound over to pay his creditors in full; to that end, he should be trustee for his own and his wife's property (for everything he had, or might inherit, would belong to his creditors); he should manage his estate for their benefit and under their inspection; in fact, he should carry on the business for them, signing his name, in every case, as 'such a one, in liquidation,' until everybody was paid in full. But if he were made a bankrupt, he should be condemned to stand in the pillory in the Exchange for a couple of hours, as they used to do, with a green cap on his head. His own

property and his wife's, and his interest in any other estate, should be forfeit to his creditors, and he should be banished the kingdom."

"Business would be a little safer," said Lourdois; "people would think twice before going into a speculation."

"The law as it stands is never carried out," cried César, lashing himself up; "more than fifty merchants out of a hundred could only pay seventy-five per cent, or they sell goods at twenty-five per cent below invoice price, and spoil trade in that way."

"M. Birotteau is in the right," said Molineux; "the law allows far too much latitude. The entire estate should be made over to the creditors, or the man should be disgraced."

"Bother take it," said César, "at the rate at which things are going, a merchant will become a licensed robber. By signing his name he can dip in any one's purse."

"You are severe, M. Birotteau," said Lourdois.

"He is right," said old Ragon.

"Every man who fails is a suspicious character," César went on, exasperated by the little loss which rang in his ears; it was like the huntsman's first distant halloo to a stag.

As he spoke, Chevet's steward brought his invoice, a pastry-cook's boy from Félix and the Café Foy arrived, together with the clarinet-player of Collinet's band, each with an account.

"The *Quart d'heure de Rabelais,*" smiled Ragon.

"My word, that was a splendid fête of yours," said Lourdois.

"I am busy," César said, and the messengers departed, leaving their invoices.

"M. Grindot," said Lourdois, who noticed that the architect was folding up a bill which bore César's signature, "you will check my account and see that it is all in order; you need do nothing more than run through it, all the prices have been agreed to on M. Birotteau's behalf."

Pillerault looked at Lourdois and Grindot.

"If architect and contractor settle the prices between them, you are being robbed," he said in his nephew's ear.

Grindot went out. Molineux followed and came up to him with a mysterious expression.

"Sir," he remarked, "you heard what I said, but you did not take my meaning; I wish you an umbrella when it comes on to rain."

Fear seized on Grindot. A man clings all the more tightly to gain which is not lawfully his; such is human nature. As a matter of fact, too, this had been a labor of love for the artist; he had given all his time and his utmost skill to the alterations of the rooms; he had done five times as much as he had been paid for, and had fallen a victim to his own self-love. The contractors had had little difficulty in tempting him. And besides the irresistible argument, there was a menace, understood though not expressed, of doing him an injury by slandering him, and there was a yet more cogent reason for yielding—the remark that Lourdois made as to the building land near the Madeleine. Clearly, Birotteau did not mean to put up a single house; he was only speculating in land.

Architects and contractors are in somewhat the same relative positions as actors and dramatists; they are dependent on each other. Grindot, to whom Birotteau left the settlement of the charges, was for the handicraftsman as against the citizen-householder. So the end of it was that three large contractors—Lourdois, Chaffaroux, and Thorien the carpenter—declared him to be "one of those good fellows for whom it is a pleasure to work." Grindot foresaw that the accounts on which he was to have his share would be paid, like his own fee, by bills; and this little old man had given him doubts as to whether those bills would be met. Grindot was prepared to show no mercy; after the manner of artists, the most ruthless enemies of the bourgeois.

By the end of December, César had invoices for sixty thousand francs. Félix, the Café Foy, Tanrade, and others, to whom small amounts were owing which must be paid in cash, had sent three times for the money. In business these small trifles do more harm than a heavy loss; they set rumors in

circulation. A loss which every one knows is a definite thing, but panic knows no limits. Birotteau's safe was empty.

Then fear seized on the perfumer. Such a thing had never happened before in his business career. Like all people who have almost forgotten their struggles with poverty, and have little strength of character, this incident, a daily occurrence in the lives of most petty shopkeepers in Paris, troubled César's brain.

He told Célestin to send in invoices to his own customers; such an unheard-of order had to be repeated twice before the astonished first assistant understood it. The "clients" —the grand name that shopkeepers used to apply to their customers, and retained by César in speaking of them, in spite of his wife, who had yielded at last with a "Call them what you like, so long as they pay us"—the "clients" were wealthy people, who paid when they pleased; in César's business there were no bad debts, though the outstanding accounts often amounted to fifty or sixty thousand francs. The second assistant took the invoice-book, and began to copy out the largest amounts. César stood in fear of his wife. He did not wish her to see his prostration beneath the simoom of misfortune, so he determined to go out.

"Good-day, sir," said Grindot, coming in with the careless air that artists assume when they talk of business matters, to which they say they are entirely unaccustomed. "I cannot obtain ready money of any sort or description for your paper, so I am compelled to ask you to give me cash instead. It is a most unfortunate thing for me that I must take this step; but I have not been to the money-lender's about it; I should not like to hawk your name about; I know enough of business to know that it would be casting a slur on it; so it is to your own interest to——"

"Speak lower, sir, if you please," said Birotteau in bewilderment. "I am very much surprised at this."

Lourdois came in.

"Here, Lourdois," said Birotteau with a smile, "do you

know about this?——" he stopped short. With the good faith of a merchant who feels secure, the poor man had been about to ask Lourdois to take Grindot's bill, by way of laughing at the architect; but he saw a cloud on Lourdois' brow, and trembled at his own imprudence. The harmless joke was the death-knell of a credit not above suspicion. In such a case a rich merchant takes back his bill; he does not offer it. Birotteau felt dizzy; it was as if a stroke of a pickaxe had laid open the pit which yawned at his feet.

"My dear M. Birotteau," said Lourdois, retiring with him to the back of the shop, "my account has been checked and passed; I must ask you to have the money ready for me by to-morrow. My daughter is going to be married to young Crottat; he wants money, and notaries will not wait and bargain; besides, no one has ever seen my name on a bill."

"You can send round the day after to-morrow," said Birotteau stiffly (he counted on the payment of the invoices). "And you also, sir,"—he spoke to Grindot.

"Why can I not have it at once?" asked the architect.

"I have my men's wages to pay in the Faubourg," said César, who had never told a lie.

He took up his hat to go with them; but the bricklayer came in with Thorien and Chaffaroux, and stopped him just as he shut the door.

"We really want the money, sir," said Chaffaroux.

"Eh! I haven't the wealth of the Indies," cried César, out of patience; and he quickly put a hundred paces between himself and the three visitors.—"There is something underneath all this. Confound the ball! Everybody takes you for a millionaire. Still, there was something very strange about Lourdois," he thought; "there is some snake in the hedge."

He went along the Rue Saint-Honoré without thinking where he was going, feeling at a very low ebb, when at a corner of the street he ran up against Alexandre Crottat, like a battering-ram, or as one mathematician absorbed in the working of a problem might collide with another.

"Ah! sir," exclaimed the future notary, "one word with you! Did Roguin pay over your four hundred thousand francs to M. Claparon?"

"You were there when the thing was done. M. Claparon gave me no receipt of any kind; my bills were to be negotiated. . . . Roguin ought to have paid them to him . . . my two hundred and forty thousand francs in coin. . . . He was told that the money was to be paid down and the transaction completed. . . . M. Popinot of the Tribunal says. . . . The vendor's receipt! . . . But . . . what makes you ask the question?"

"What makes me ask you such a question? To know whether your two hundred thousand francs are in Claparon's hands or Roguin's. Roguin is such an old acquaintance of yours, that he might have scrupled to take your money, and handed it over to Claparon; if so, you will have had a narrow escape! But how stupid I am! He has made off with them, for he has M. Claparon's money; luckily, Claparon had only paid a hundred thousand francs. Roguin has absconded; I myself paid him a hundred thousand francs for his practice without taking a receipt; I gave it him as I might give my purse to you to keep for me. Your vendors have not been paid a stiver; they have just been round to see me. The money you raised on your land has no existence for you, nor for the man of whom you borrowed it; Roguin had swallowed it like your hundred thousand francs; which—er—he has not had this long while. And he has taken your last payment of a hundred thousand francs with him too; I remember going to the bank for the money."

The pupils of César's eyes dilated so widely that he could see nothing but red flames before him.

"Your draft on the bank for a hundred thousand francs, a hundred thousand francs of mine paid for the practice, and a hundred thousand francs belonging to M. Claparon—three hundred thousand francs gone like smoke, to say nothing of the defalcations that have yet to be found out," the young notary went on. "They feared for Mme. Roguin's

life; M. du Tillet spent the night beside her. Du Tillet himself has had a narrow escape! Roguin has been pestering him this month past to draw him into the Madeleine speculation, but, luckily, all his capital was locked up in some project of the Nucingens'. Roguin wrote his wife a frightful letter. I have just seen it. For five years he has been gambling with his clients' money, and why? To spend it on a mistress—*La belle Hollandaise;* he left her a fortnight before he made this stroke. She had squandered till she had not a farthing; her furniture was sold; she had put her name on bills of exchange. Then she hid from her creditors in a house in the Palais-Royal, and was murdered there last evening by an officer in the army. Heaven soon dealt the punishment to her who, beyond a doubt, had run through Roguin's fortune. There are women to whom nothing is sacred; think of squandering away a notary's practice!

"Mme. Roguin will have nothing except what has been secured to her by her legal mortgage, and all the scoundrel's property has been mortgaged beyond its value. The practice is to be sold for three hundred thousand francs! and I, who thought I was doing a good stroke of business, must begin by paying an extra hundred thousand francs for my practice; I hold no receipt; and there are defalcations which will eat up the value of the practice and the deposit of caution money. The creditors will think that I am in it if I say anything about my hundred thousand francs, and you have to be very careful of your reputation when you are beginning for yourself.—You will hardly get thirty per cent. Such a brew to drink of at my age! That a man of fifty-nine should take up with a woman. . . . The old rogue! Three weeks ago he told me not to marry Césarine, and said that before long you would not have bread to eat, the monster!"

Alexandre might have talked on for a long while; Birotteau stood like a man turned to stone. Each sentence fell like a stunning blow. He heard nothing in the sounds but his death-knell; just as when Alexandre first began to speak, he had seemed to see his own house in flames. He looked so

white, and stood so motionless, that Alexandre Crottat, who had taken the worthy perfumer for a clear-headed, capable man of business, was frightened at last. Roguin's successor did not know that this stroke had swept away César's whole fortune. A swift thought of suicide flashed through the brain of the merchant, so profoundly religious by nature. In such a case suicide is a way of escape from a thousand deaths, and it seems logical to accept but one. Alexandre Crottat lent his arm, and tried to walk with him, but it was impossible —César tottered as if he had been drunk.

"Why, what is the matter with you?" asked Crottat. "My good M. César, pluck up heart a little! It takes more than this to kill a man! Besides, you will recover forty thousand francs; the man who lent you the money had not the money to lend, and did not pay it over to you; you might plead that the contract was void."

"My ball.—My Cross.—Two hundred thousand francs' worth of my paper on the market, and nothing in the safe. . . . The Ragons, Pillerault. . . . And my wife, who saw it all!"

A shower of confused words, which called up ideas that overwhelmed him and caused unbearable pangs, fell like hail laying waste the flower beds of the *Queen of Roses.*

"If only my head were cut off," Birotteau cried at last; "it is so heavy that it weighs me down, and it is good for nothing in this . . ."

"Poor old Birotteau!" said Alexandre; "then are you in difficulties?"

"Difficulties!"

"Very well; keep up your heart and struggle with them."

"Struggle!" echoed the perfumer.

"Du Tillet used to be your assistant; he has a level head, he will help you."

"Du Tillet?"

"Come along!"

"Good heavens! I don't like to go home like this," cried Birotteau. "You that are my friend, if friends there are, you

who have dined with me, you in whom I have taken an interest, call a cab for me, for my wife's sake; and come with me, Xandrot . . ."

With no little difficulty Crottat put the inert mechanism, called César, into a cab.

"Xandrot," he said, in a voice broken with tears, for the tears had begun to fall, and the iron band about his head seemed to be loosened a little, "let us call at the shop. Speak to Célestin for me. My friend, tell him that it is a matter of life and death for me and for my wife. And let no one prattle about Roguin's disappearance on any pretext whatever. Ask Césarine to come down, and beg her to allow no one to say anything about it to her mother. You must beware of your best friends, Pillerault, the Ragons, everybody——"

The change in Birotteau's voice made a deep impression on Crottat, who understood the importance of the request. On their way to the magistrate, they stopped at the house in the Rue Saint-Honoré. Célestin and Césarine were horrified to see Birotteau lying back in white and speechless hebetude, as it were, in the cab.

"Keep the affair a secret for me," said the perfumer.

"Ah!" said Xandrot to himself, "he is coming round; I thought it was all over with him."

The conference between Alexandre and the magistrate lasted long. The President of the Chamber of Notaries was sent for; César was taken hither and thither like a parcel; he did not stir, he did not utter a word. Towards seven o'clock in the evening Alexandre Crottat took the perfumer home again, and the thought of appearing before his wife had a bracing effect on him. The young notary had the charity to precede him, to tell Mme. Birotteau that her husband had had a sort of fit.

"His ideas are confused," he said, making a gesture to describe a bewildered state of the brain; "perhaps he should be bled, or leeches ought to be put on him."

"I knew how it would be," said Constance—nothing was further from her thoughts than the actual disaster—"he did

not take his medicine as usual at the beginning of winter, and for these two months he has been working like a galley slave, as if he had to earn his daily bread."

So César's wife and daughter begged him to go to bed, and Dr. Haudry, Birotteau's doctor, was sent for. Old Haudry was a doctor of the school of Molière; he had a large practice, and adhered to old-fashioned methods and out-of-date formulæ; consulting physician though he was, he drugged his patients like any quack doctor. He came, made his diagnosis, and ordered the immediate application of a sinapism to the soles of César's feet; he detected symptoms of cerebral congestion.

"What can have brought it on?" asked Constance.

"The damp weather," said the doctor. Césarine had given him a hint.

A doctor is often obliged professionally to talk nonsense with a learned air, to save the honor or the life of persons in health who stand about the patient's bed. The old physician had seen so much, that half a word sufficed for him. Césarine went out on to the stairs to ask about the treatment.

"Rest and quiet; then when there is less pressure on the head, we will venture on tonics."

For two days Mme. César sat by her husband's bedside. Often she thought that he was delirious. As he lay in his wife's pretty blue chamber, he said many things, which were enigmas for Constance, at the sight of the hangings, the furniture, and the costly magnificence of the room.

"He is light-headed," she said to Césarine, when César sat upright in bed and began solemnly to repeat scraps of the Code. "If the personal or household expenses are considered excessive. . . . Take away those curtains!" he cried.

After three dreadful days of anxiety for César's reason, the Tourangeau's strong peasant constitution triumphed, the pressure on the brain ceased. M. Haudry ordered cordials and a strengthening diet, and after a cup of coffee seasonably administered, César was on his feet again. Constance, worn out, took her husband's place.

"Poor thing!" said César, when he saw her sleeping.

"Come, papa, take courage! You have so much talent, that you will triumph over this. Never mind. M. Anselme will help you," and Césarine murmured the sweet, vague words, made still sweeter by tenderness, which put courage into the most sorely defeated, as a mother's crooning songs soothe the pain of a teething infant.

"Yes, child, I will struggle. But not a word of this to any one whatever; not to Popinot, who loves us, nor to your uncle. In the first place, I will write to my brother; he is a canon, I believe, a priest attached to a cathedral. He spends nothing, so he must have saved something. Five thousand francs put by every year for twenty years—he ought to have a hundred thousand francs. Priests have credit in country places."

Césarine, in her hurry to set a little table and the necessaries for writing a letter before her father, brought the remainder of the rose-colored cards for the ball.

"Burn them all!" cried the merchant. "The devil alone could have put the notion of that ball into my head. If I fail, it will look as if I were a rogue. Come, let us go straight to the point."

César's letter to François Birotteau.

"My dear Brother,—My business is passing through a crisis so difficult that I implore you to send me all the money at your disposal, even if you are obliged to borrow.—Yours truly, César.

"Your niece Césarine, who is with me as I write this letter, while my poor wife is asleep, desires to be remembered to you, and sends her love."

This postscript was added at Césarine's instance. She gave the letter to Raguet.

"Father," said she, when she came up again, "here is M. Lebas, who wants to speak to you."

"M. Lebas!" cried César, starting as though misfortune had made a criminal of him, "a judge!"

"Dear M. Birotteau," said the stout merchant-draper as he came in, "I take too deep an interest in you—knowing each other so long as we have, and being elected judges together, as we were, for the first time—not to let you know that one Bidault, otherwise Gigonnet, has bills of yours made payable to his order, *without guarantee,* by the firm of Claparon. Those two words are not merely an insult; they give a fatal shake to your credit."

"M. Claparon would like to speak to you," said Célestin, putting in his head; "am I to show him up?"

"We shall soon hear the why and wherefore of this affront," remarked Lebas.

"This is M. Lebas, sir," said César, as Claparon came in; "he is a judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, and my friend——"

"Oh! the gentleman is M. Lebas, is he?" said Claparon, interrupting César, "delighted to make his acquaintance; M. Lebas of the tribunal, there are so many Lebas, to say nothing of the *hauts* and the *bas*——"

"He has seen the bills which I gave to you, and which (so you told me) should not be negotiated," Birotteau went on, interrupting the rattle in his turn; "he has seen them with the words 'without guarantee' written upon them."

"Well," said Claparon, "and as a matter of fact they will not be negotiated; they are in the hands of a man with whom I do a great deal of business—old Bidault. That is why I put 'without guarantee' on them. If the bills had been meant to be put in circulation, you would have made them to his order in the first place. M. Lebas, as a judge, will understand my position. What do the bills represent? The price of some landed property. To be paid by whom? By Birotteau. Why would you have me guarantee Birotteau by my signature? We must, each of us, pay our share of the aforesaid price. Now, isn't it enough to be jointly and severally responsible to the vendors? I have made an inflexible rule

in business: I no more give my signature for nothing than I give a receipt for money that is still to be paid. I assume the worst. Who signs, pays. I don't want to be laid open to pay three times over."

"Three times," said César.

"Yes, sir," said Claparon. "I have already guaranteed Birotteau to the vendors; why should I guarantee him again to the bill-discounter? Our case is a hard one; Roguin goes off with a hundred thousand francs of mine; so, even now, my half of the land is costing me five hundred thousand instead of four. Roguin has taken two hundred and forty thousand francs belonging to Birotteau. What would you do in my place, M. Lebas? Put yourself in my shoes. I have not the honor of being known to you, any more than I know M. Birotteau. Do you take me? We go halves in a business speculation. You pay down all your share of the money in cash; and as for me, I give bills for my share. I offer you the bills, and out of excessive benevolence you take them and give money for them. You learn that Claparon the rich banker, looked up to by everyone—I accept all the virtues in the world—that the virtuous Claparon is in difficulties for a matter of six millions; would you select that moment to give your name as a guarantee for mine? You would be mad! Well, now, M. Lebas, Birotteau is in the position in which I imagined Claparon to be. Don't you see that in that case, being jointly and severally responsible, I may be made to pay the purchasers; that I can be called upon to pay a second time for Birotteau's share to the extent of his bills, that is, if I back them, without having——"

"Pay whom?" interrupted the perfumer.

"Without having his half of the land," pursued Claparon, heedless of the interruption, "for I should have no hold on him; so I should have to buy it over again. So—I might pay three times over."

"Repay whom?" insisted Birotteau.

"Why, the holder of the bills; if I endorsed them, and you came to grief."

"I shall not fail, sir," said Birotteau.

"All right," said Claparon. "You have been a judge, you are a clever man of business; you know that we ought to provide for all contingencies, so do not be astonished is I act in a business-like way."

"M. Claparon is right," said Joseph Lebas.

"I am right," continued Claparon, "right from a business point of view. But this is a question of landed property. Now, what ought I myself to receive?—Money, for the vendors must be paid in coin. Let us set aside the two hundred and forty thousand francs, which M. Birotteau will find, I am sure," said Claparon, looking at Lebas. "I came to ask you for the trifling sum of twenty-five thousand francs," he added, looking at Birotteau.

"Twenty-five thousand francs!" cried César, and it seemed to him that the blood turned to ice in his veins. "But, sir, what for?"

"Eh! my dear sir, we are bound to sign, seal, and deliver the deeds in the presence of a notary. Now, as to paying for the land, we may arrange that among ourselves, but when the Treasury comes in—your humble servant! The Treasury does not amuse itself with idle words; it allows you credit from your hand to your pocket, and we shall have to come down with the money—forty-four thousand francs this week in law expenses. I was far from expecting reproaches when I came here; for, thinking that you might find it inconvenient to pay twenty-five thousand francs, I was going to tell you that by the merest chance I had saved for you——"

"What?" asked Birotteau, giving in that word that cry of distress which no man can mistake.

"A trifle! Twenty-five thousand francs in bills given to you by one and another, which Roguin gave me to discount. I have credited you with the amount as against the registration and other expenses; I will send you the account; there is a little matter to deduct for discounting them, and six or seven thousand francs will still be owing to me."

"This all seems to me to be perfectly fair," said Lebas. "In

the place of this gentleman, who appears to me to understand business very well, I should act the same towards a stranger."

"This will not be the death of M. Birotteau," said Claparon; "it takes more than one blow to kill an old wolf; I have seen wolves with bullets in their heads running about like—Lord, yes, like wolves."

"Who could have foreseen such rascality on Roguin's part?" asked Lebas, as much alarmed by César's dumbness as by so vast a speculation outside the perfumery trade.

"A little more, and I should have given this gentleman a receipt for four hundred thousand francs," said Claparon, "and I was in a stew. I had paid over a hundred thousand francs to Roguin the night before. Our mutual confidence saved me. It would have seemed to us all a matter of indifference whether the money should be lying at his office or in my possession till the day when the contracts were completed."

"It would have been much better if each had deposited his money with the Bank of France till the time came for paying it over," said Lebas.

"Roguin was as good as the Bank, I thought," said César. "But he too is in this business," he added, looking at Claparon.

"Yes, for a fourth, and in name only," answered Claparon. "After the imbecility of allowing him to go off with my money, there is but one thing more out-and-out idiotic—and that would be to make him a present of some more. If he sends me back my hundred thousand francs, and two hundred thousand more on his own account, then we will see! But he will take good care not to put the money into an affair that must simmer for four years before you have a spoonful of soup. If he has only gone off with three hundred thousand francs, as they say, he will want quite fifty thousand livres a year to live decently abroad."

"The bandit!"

"Eh! goodness! An infatuation for a woman brought Roguin to that pass," said Claparon. "What man at his age can answer for it that he will not be mastered and carried

away by a last fancy? Not one of us, sober as we are, can tell where it will end. A last love is the most violent. Look at Cardot, and Camusot, and Matifat—every one of them has a mistress! And if all of us are gulled, is it not our own fault? How was it that we did not suspect a notary who speculated on his own account? Any notary, any bill-broker, or stockbroker who does business on his own account, is not to be trusted. Failure for them is fraudulent bankruptcy; they are sent up to the Court of Assize for trial; so, of course, they prefer a foreign court. I shall not make that blunder again. Well, well, we are all too weak to pass judgment by default on a man with whom we have dined, who has given grand balls, a man in society, in fact! Nobody complains; it is wrong."

"Very wrong," said Birotteau. "The provisions of the law with regard to liquidations and insolvency ought to be revised throughout."

"If you should happen to need me," said Lebas, addressing Birotteau, "I am quite at your service."

"M. Birotteau has need of no one," said the indefatigable prattler (du Tillet had opened the sluices after pouring in the water, and Claparon was repeating a lesson which du Tillet had very skilfully taught him). "His position is clear. Roguin's estate will pay a dividend of fifty per cent, from what young Crottat tells me. Besides the dividend, M. César will come by the forty thousand francs which the lender on the mortgage did not pay over; he can raise more money on his property; and we have four months in which to pay two hundred thousand francs to the vendors. Between now and then M. Birotteau will meet his bills (for he ought not to reckon on meeting them with the money which Roguin made off with). But if M. Birotteau should find himself a little pinched . . . well, with one or two accommodation bills, he will pull through."

The perfumer took heart as he listened. Claparon analyzed the business, summed it up, and traced out a plan of action, as it were, for him. Gradually his expression grew de-

cuted and resolute, and he conceived a great respect for the ex-commercial traveler's business capacity. Du Tillet had thought it expedient to make Claparon believe that he was one of Roguin's victims. He had given Claparon a hundred thousand francs to give to Roguin, who returned them to du Tillet. Claparon, being uneasy, played his part to the life; he told anybody who cared to listen to him that Roguin had mulcted him of a hundred thousand francs. Du Tillet doubted Claparon's strength of mind; he fancied that principles of honesty and conscientious scruples still lingered in his puppet, and would not confide the whole of his plans to him; he knew, moreover, that his instrument was incapable of guessing at them.

A day came when his commercial go-between reproached him. "If our first friend is not our first dupe, we should never find a second," said du Tillet, and he broke in pieces the tool which was no longer useful.

M. Lebas and Claparon went out together, and Birotteau was left alone.

"I can pull through," he said to himself. "My liabilities, in the shape of bills to be met, amount to two hundred and thirty-five thousand francs. That is to say—seventy-five thousand francs for the house, and a hundred and seventy-five thousand francs for the building land. Now, to cover this, I have Roguin's dividend, which will amount may be to a hundred thousand francs; and I can cancel the loan on my land, that is a hundred and forty thousand francs in all. The thing to be done is to make a hundred thousand francs by the Cephalic Oil; and a few accommodation bills, or a loan from a banker will tide me over until I can make good the loss, and the building land reaches its enhanced value."

When a man in misfortune once can weave a romance of hope out of the more or less solid reasonings with which he fills the pillow on which he lays his head, he is often saved. Many a one has taken the confidence given by an illusion for energy. Perhaps the half of courage is really hope, and the Catholic religion reckons hope among the virtues. Has not

hope buoyed up many a weakling, giving him time to await the chances which life brings?

Birotteau made up his mind to apply, in the first place, to his wife's uncle, and to disclose his position to his relative before going elsewhere. He went down the Rue Saint Honoré and reached the Rue Bourdonnais, not without experiencing inward pangs, which caused such violent internal disturbance that he thought his health was deranged. There was a fire in his vitals. As a matter of fact, those whose sentience is keenest in the diaphragm suffer in that region; just as those whose faculty of perception resides in the brain suffer in the head. In the grave crises, the system is attacked at the point where the temperament locates the seat of life in the individual; weaklings have the colic, a Napoleon grows drowsy.

Before a man of honor can storm a confidence and overleap the barriers of pride, he must have felt the prick of the spur of Necessity, that hard rider, more than once. So for two days Birotteau had borne that spurring before he went to see Pillerault, and then family reasons decided him — however things might go, he must explain the position to the stern ironmonger. Yet, for all that, when he reached the door, he felt in his inmost soul as a child feels on a visit to the dentist, that his courage was sinking away; and Birotteau was not about to face a momentary pang, he quailed before a whole lifetime to come. Slowly he went up the stairs, and found the old man reading the *Constitutionnel* by the fireside; on a little round table his frugal breakfast was set — a roll, butter, Brie cheese, and a cup of coffee.

"There is real wisdom," said Birotteau to himself, and he envied his uncle's life.

"Well," said Pillerault, laying down his spectacles, "I heard about Roguin's affair yesterday at the Café David; so his mistress, *La belle Hollandaise*, is murdered! I hope that, warned by us who want to be actual proprietors, you have been to Claparon and taken a receipt?"

"Alas! uncle, that is just it; you have laid your finger on the spot. No."

"Oh, bother! you are ruined," said Pillerault, dropping his paper; and Birotteau picked it up, although it was the *Constitutionnel*.

This thought was such a shock, that Pillerault's stern features, always like a profile on a coin, grew hard as if they had been struck in bronze. He stared with steady eyes that saw nothing, through the windows, at the opposite wall, and listened while Birotteau poured out a long discourse. Evidently while he heard he deliberated; he was pondering the case with the inflexibility of a Minos who crossed the Styx of commerce, when he left the Quai des Morfondus for his little third-floor dwelling.

"Well, uncle," asked Birotteau at last, expecting some answer to a final entreaty to sell *rentes* worth six thousand francs a year.

"Well, my poor nephew, I cannot do it. Things have gone too far. We, the Ragons and I, shall both lose fifty thousand francs. It was by my advice that the good folk sold their shares in the Wortschin Mines. I feel myself bound, if they lose the money, not to replace their capital, but to give them a helping hand, and to help my niece and Césarine. You might perhaps all of you want bread, and you must come to me——"

"Bread, uncle?"

"Well, yes, bread. Just look the facts in the face: *you will not pull through!* Out of five thousand six hundred francs a year, I will set aside four thousand to divide between you and the Ragons. When your disaster comes, I know Constance, she will slave and deny herself everything—and so will you, César!"

"There is hope yet, uncle."

"I do not see it as you do."

"I will prove the contrary."

"Nothing would please me better."

Birotteau went without an answer for Pillerault. He had come to find comfort and encouragement, he had received a second blow; a blow less heavy than the first one, it is true;

but whereas the first had been dealt at his head, this thrust had gone to his heart, and the poor man's life lay in his affections. He had gone down part of the way, and then he turned and went up again.

"Sir," he said, in a constrained voice, "Constance knows nothing of this, keep the secret for me at least; and beg the Ragons not to disturb the peace that I need if I am to fight against misfortune."

Pillerault made a sign of assent.

"Take courage, César," he said. "I see that you are angry with me, but some day you will acknowledge that I am right, when you think of your wife and daughter."

Discouraged by this opinion given by his uncle, whose clear-headedness he acknowledged, César suddenly dropped from the heights of hope into the miry slough of uncertainty. When a man's affairs take an ugly turn like this, he is apt to become the plaything of circumstances, unless he is of Pillerault's temper; he follows other people's ideas, or his own, much as a wayfarer pursues a will-o'-the-wisp. He allows himself to be swept away by the whirlwind when he should either lie prostrate with his eyes shut, and let it pass over him, or rise and watch the direction that it takes, to escape the blast. In the midst of his anguish, Birotteau bethought himself of the necessary steps to be taken with regard to his loan. He went to see Derville, a consulting barrister in the Rue Vivienne, so as to set about it the sooner, if Derville should see any chance of cancelling the contract. Him he found sitting, wrapped in his white flannel dressing-gown, by the fireside, staid and self-possessed, as is the wont of men of law, accustomed as they are to the most harrowing disclosures. Birotteau felt, as a new thing in his experience, this necessary coolness; it was like ice to an excited man like Birotteau, telling the story of his misfortunes, smarting from the wounds that he had received, stricken with the fever induced by the risks his fortunes were running, and cruelly beset, since honor and life and wife and child were all imperiled.

"If it is proved," said Derville, when he had heard him out, "that the lender no longer had in Roguin's keeping the sum of money which Roguin induced you to borrow of him, as there has been no transfer of the actual money, the contract might be annulled, and the lender will have his remedy (as you also will have for your hundred thousand francs) in Roguin's caution-money. In that case, I will answer for your lawsuit, so far as it is possible to answer for any action at law, for no action is a foregone conclusion."

The opinion of so learned an expert put a little heart into Birotteau. He begged Derville to obtain a judgment within a fortnight. The advocate answered to the effect that Birotteau might be obliged to wait three months before the contract would be annulled.

"Three months!" cried Birotteau, who thought that he had found an expedient for raising money at once.

"Well, if you yourself succeed in gaining a prompt hearing for your case, we cannot hurry your opponent to suit your pace; he will take advantage of the delays of procedure; advocates are not always at the Palais; who knows but that the other party will let judgment go against him by default? And he will appeal. You can't set your own pace, my dear sir!" said Derville, smiling.

"But at the Tribunal of Commerce——"

"Oh!" said the advocate, "the Consular Tribunal is one thing, and the Tribunal of First Instance is another. You do things in a slashing way over yonder. Now, at the Palais de Justice there are formalities to be gone through. These formalities are the bulwarks of Justice. How would you like it if a demand for forty thousand francs was suddenly fired off at you? Well, your opponent, who will see that amount compromised, will dispute it. Delays are the *chevaux-de-frise* of the law."

"You are right," said Birotteau, and he took leave of Derville with a deadly chill at his heart.—"They are all right. Money! Money!" cried the perfumer, out in the street, talking

to himself, as is the wont of busy men in this turbulent seething Paris, which a modern poet calls "a vat."

As he came into his shop, one of the assistants, who had been out delivering invoices to the customers, told him that as the New Year was at hand, every one had torn off the receipt-form at the foot and kept the invoices.

"Then there is no money anywhere!" Birotteau exclaimed aloud in the shop. All the assistants looked up at this, and he bit his lips.

In this way five days went by; and during those five days Braschon, Lourdois, Thorien, Grindot, Chaffaroux, and all the creditors whose bills remained unpaid, passed through the chameleon's intermediate transitions of tone, from the serene hues of confidence to the wrathful red of the commercial Bellona. In Paris, in such crises, suspicion is as quick to reach the panic stage as confidence is slow to show expansive symptoms; and when a creditor once adopts the restringent system of doubts and precautions in business relations, he is apt to descend to underhand villainies that put him below his debtor's level. From cringing civility, the creditors passed successively through the inflammatory phase, the red of impatience, the lurid coruscations of importunity, to outbursts of disappointment, and from the cold-blue stage of making up their minds to the black insolence of threatening to serve a writ.

Braschon, the rich furniture-dealer of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, who had not been included in the invitations to the ball, sounded to arms in his quality of the creditor whose self-love has been wounded. Paid he meant to be, and within twenty-four hours; he required security, not deposits of furniture, but a second mortgage, the mortgage for forty thousand francs on the property in the Faubourg du Temple. In spite of their furious recriminations, these gentry still left César occasional intervals of peace, when he might breathe; but instead of bringing a resolute will to carry these outworks of an awkward position, and so putting an end to them, Birotteau was taxing all his wits to keep the state of things from

the knowledge of his wife, and the one person who could give him counsel knew nothing of his difficulties. He stood sentinel on the threshold of his shop. He confided his momentary inconvenience to Célestin, who watched his employer with curious and astonished eyes; already César had fallen somewhat in his esteem, as men accustomed to prosperity are apt to dwindle when evil days discover that all their power consists in the increased facility of dealing with matters of every-day experience, acquired by an ordinary intelligence.

But if César lacked the mental energy required for defending himself when attacked at so many points at once, he had sufficient courage to face his position. Before the 15th of January he required the sum of sixty thousand francs, and thirty thousand of these were due on the 31st of December. Part of this sum was owing for the house, part for rent and accounts to be paid in ready money, part of it in bills to be met; with all his efforts he could only collect twenty thousand francs, so that there was a deficit of ten thousand, to be made up by the end of the month. Nothing seemed hopeless to him, for he had already ceased to look beyond the present moment, and, like an adventurer, had begun to live from day to day. At length he resolved to make what for him was a bold stroke. Before it was known that he was in difficulties, he would apply to François Keller, banker, orator, and philanthropist, widely known for his beneficence, and for his desire to stand well with the mercantile world of Paris, always with a view to representing their interests one day as a deputy in the Chamber. In politics the banker was a Liberal, and César was a Royalist; but the perfumer decided that the capitalist was a man after his own heart, and that a difference of opinion in politics was but one reason the more for opening an account. If paper should be necessary, he did not doubt Popinot's devotion, and counted upon obtaining from him some thirty bills of a thousand francs each; with these he might hold out until he gained his lawsuit, the forty thousand francs involved in it being offered as security to the most urgent creditors.

The effusive soul, who was wont to confide to the pillow of

his dear Constance the least emotions of his existence, who drew his courage from her, and was wont to seek of her the light thrown by contradiction on all topics, was cut off from all exchange of ideas with his first assistant, his uncle, and his wife, and found that the weight of his cares was thereby doubled. Yet this self-sacrificing martyr preferred suffering alone to the alternative of casting his wife's soul into the fiery furnace; he would tell her about the danger when it was past. Perhaps, too, he shrank from telling her the hideous secret; he stood in some fear of his wife, and this fear lent him courage. He went every morning to low mass at Saint-Roch, and told his troubles to God.

"If I do not meet a soldier on my way back from Saint-Roch, I will take it as a sign that my prayer is heard. It shall be God's answer to me," he said to himself, after he had prayed for deliverance.

And, for his happiness, he did not meet a soldier. Yet, nevertheless, his heart was over-full, and he needed another human heart to whom he could make moan. Césarine, to whom he had already told the fatal news, learned the whole truth, and stolen glances were exchanged between them, glances fraught with despair or repressed hope, passionate invocations, appeals, and sympathetic responses, answering gleams of intelligence between soul and soul. For his wife César put on high spirits and mirth. If Constance asked any question—"Pshaw, everything was all right. Popinot" (to whom César gave not a thought) "was doing well! The Oil was selling! Claparon's bills would be met; there was nothing to fear." The hollow merriment was ghastly. When his wife lay sleeping amid the splendors, Birotteau would rise, and fall to thinking over his misfortune; and more than once Césarine came in, in her night-shift, barefooted, with a shawl about her white shoulders.

"Papa, you are crying; I can hear you," she would say, and she would cry herself as she spoke.

When César had written to ask the great François Keller to make an appointment with him, he fell into such a state of

torpor that Césarine persuaded him to walk out with her. In the streets of Paris he saw nothing but huge red placards, and the words CEPHALIC OIL in staring letters everywhere met his eyes.

While the glory of the *Queen of Roses* was thus waning in disastrous gloom, the firm of A. Popinot was dawning radiant with the sunrise splendors of success. Anselme had taken counsel of Gaudissart and Finot, and had launched his oil boldly. During the past three days two thousand placards had been posted in the most conspicuous situations in Paris. Every one in the streets was confronted with the Cephalic Oil, and willy-nilly must read the pithy remarks from Finot's pen as to the impossibility of stimulating the growth of the hair, and the perils attendant on dyeing it, together with an extract from a paper read before the Académie des Sciences by Vauquelin. It was as good as a certificate of existence for dead hair, thus held out to those who should use the Cephalic Oil. The shop-doors of every perfumer, hair-dresser, and wig-maker in Paris were made glorious with gilded frames, containing a beautiful design, printed on vellum paper, with a reduced facsimile of the picture of *Hero and Leander* at the top, and beneath it ran the motto, *The ancient peoples of antiquity preserved their hair by the use of* CEPHALIC OIL.

"He has thought of permanent frames; he has found an advertisement that will last for ever!" said Birotteau to himself, as he stood staring in dull amazement at the shop-front of the *Silver Bell*.

"Then you did not see a frame on your own door?" asked his daughter. "M. Anselme brought it himself, and left three hundred bottles of the oil with Célestin."

"No, I did not see it," he answered.

"And Célestin has already sold fifty to chance comers, and sixty to our own customers."

"Oh!" said César.

The sound of myriad bells that misery sets ringing in the ears of her victims had made the perfumer dizzy; his head seemed to spin round and round in those days. Popinot had

waited a whole hour to speak with him on the day before, and had gone away after chatting with Constance and Césarine; the women told him that César was very busy over his great scheme.

"Oh yes, the building-land!" Popinot had said.

Luckily, Popinot had not left the Rue des Cinq-Diamants for a month; he had worked day and night at his business, and had seen neither Ragon, nor Pillerault, nor his uncle. The poor lad was never in bed before two o'clock in the morning; he had only two assistants, and at the rate at which things were going he would soon have work enough for four. Opportunity is everything in business; success is a horse which, if caught by the mane and ridden by a bold rider, will carry him on to fortune. Popinot told himself that he should receive a welcome when, at the end of six months, he could carry the news to his aunt and uncle—"I am saved; my fortune is made!"—a welcome, too, from Birotteau when, at the end of the first half year, he should bring him his share of the profits—thirty or forty thousand francs! He had not heard of Roguin's disappearance, nor of César's consequent disasters and difficulties; so that he could not let fall any indiscreet remarks in Madame Birotteau's presence.

Popinot had promised Finot five hundred francs for each of the leading newspapers (ten in all), and three hundred francs for each second-rate paper (and of these, too, there were ten), if the Cephalic Oil was mentioned three times a month in each. Of those eight thousand francs, Finot beheld three thousand as his own, his first stake to lay on the vast green table of speculation. So he had sprung like a lion upon his friends and acquaintances; he haunted newspaper offices; writers of newspaper articles awoke from slumber to find him sitting by their pillows; and the evening found him pacing the lobbies of all the theatres. "Remember my oil, my dear fellow; it is nothing to me; a matter of good fellowship, you know; Gaudissart, a jolly dog." With this formula, his harangues always began and ended. He filled up spaces at the foot of the last columns in the papers, and left the money to

those upon the staff. He was as cunning as any super who is minded to transform himself into an actor, and as active as an errand boy on sixty francs a month; he wrote insinuating letters, he worked on the vanity of all and sundry, he did dirty work for editors, to the end that his paragraphs might be inserted in their papers. His enthusiastic energy left no means untried—money, dinners, platitudes. By means of tickets for the play he corrupted the men who finish off the columns towards midnight with short paragraphs of small news items already set up; hanging about the printing-office for that purpose, as if he had proofs to revise.

So by dint of making every one his friend, Finot secured the triumph of the Cephalic Oil over the *Pâte de Regnault* and the *Mixture Brésilienne,* over all the inventions, in fact, whose promoters had the wit to comprehend the influence of journalism and the effect produced upon the public mind by the piston stroke of the reiterated paragraph. In that age of innocence, journalists, like draught-oxen, were unaware of their strength; their heads ran on actresses—Mesdemoiselles Florine, Tullia, Mariette—they lorded it over all creation, and made no practical use of their powers. In Andoche's propositions there was no actress to be applauded, no drama to be put upon the stage; he did not ask them to make a success of his vaudevilles, nor to pay him for his paragraphs; on the contrary, he offered money in season and opportune breakfasts; so there was not a newspaper that did not mention the Cephalic Oil, and how that it was in accordance with Vauquelin's investigations; not a journal that did not scoff at the superstition that the hair could be induced to grow, and proclaim the danger of dyeing it.

These paragraphs rejoiced Gaudissart's heart. He laid in a supply of papers wherewith to demolish prejudice in the provinces, and accomplished the manœuvre known among speculators since his time as "taking the public by storm." In those days newspapers from Paris exercised a great influence in the departments, the hapless country districts being still "without organs." The Paris newspaper, therefore, was

taken up as a serious study, and read through from the heading to the printer's name on the last line of the last page, where the irony of persecuted opinion might be supposed to lurk.

Gaudissart, thus supported by the press, had a brilliant success from the very first in every town where his tongue had play. Every provincial shopkeeper was anxious for a frame and copies of *Hero and Leander*. Finot devised that charming joke against Macassar Oil, which drew such laughter at the Funambules, when Pierrot takes up an old house-brush, visibly worn down to the holes, and rubs it with Macassar Oil, and lo the stump becomes a mop, a piece of irony which brought down the house. In later days Finot would gaily relate how that but for those three thousand francs he must have died of want and misery. For him three thousand francs was a fortune. In this campaign he discovered the power of advertising, which he was to wield so wisely and so much to his own profit. Three months later this pioneer was the editor of a small paper, of which after a time he became the proprietor, and so laid the foundation of his fortune. Even as the Illustrious Gaudissart, that Murat among commercial travelers, "took the public by storm," and gained brilliant victories along the frontiers and in the provinces for the house of Popinot, so did the cause gain ground in public opinion in Paris, thanks to the desperate assault upon the newspapers, which gave it the prompt publicity likewise secured by the *Mixture Brésilienne* and the *Pâte de Regnault*. Three fortunes were made by this means, and then began the descent of the thousands of ambitious tradesmen who have since gone down by battalions into the arena of journalism, and there called advertising into being. A mighty revolution was wrought.

At that moment the words "Popinot & Company" were flaunting on every wall and shop door; and Birotteau, unable to measure the enormous area over which these announcements were displayed, contented himself with saying to Césarine, "Little Popinot is following in my footsteps," with-

out comprehending the difference of the times, without appreciation of the new methods and improved means of communication which spread intelligence much more rapidly than heretofore.

Birotteau had not set foot in his factory since the ball; he did not know how busy and energetic Popinot had been. Anselme had set all Birotteau's operatives on the work, and slept in the place. He saw Césarine sitting on every packing-case and reclining on every package; her face looked at him from each new invoice. "She will be my wife!" he said to himself, as with coat thrown off, and shirt-sleeves rolled above the elbows, he hammered in the nails with all his might, while his assistants were sent out on business.

The next day, after spending the whole night in pondering what to say and what not to say to the great banker, César reached the Rue du Houssaye, and entered, with a heart that beat painfully fast, the mansion of the Liberal financier, the adherent of a political party accused, and not unjustly, of desiring the downfall of the Bourbons. To Birotteau, as to most small merchants in Paris, the manners and customs and the personality of those who move in high financial circles were quite unknown; for the smaller traders usually deal with lesser houses, which form a sort of intermediate term, a highly satisfactory arrangement for the great capitalists, who find in them one guarantee the more.

Constance and Birotteau, who had never overdrawn their balance, who had never known what it was to have no money in the safe, and no bills in the portfolio, had not had recourse to these banks of the second order; and, for the best of reasons, were entirely unknown in the higher financial world. Perhaps it is a mistaken policy sedulously to abstain from borrowing even though you may not require the money; opinions differ on this head; but be that as it may, Birotteau at that moment deeply regretted that he had never put his signature to a piece of paper. Yet, as he was known as a deputy-mayor and a shrewd man of business, he imagined that he would only have to mention his name, and he should

see the banker at once; he did not know that men flocked to the Kellers' audiences as to the court of a king. In the ante-chamber of the study occupied by the man with so many claims to greatness, Birotteau found himself among a crowd composed of deputies, writers, journalists, stockbrokers, great merchants, men of business, engineers, and, above all, of familiars, who made their way through the groups of speakers and knocked in a particular manner at the door of the study, where they had the privilege of entry.

"What am I in the middle of this machinery?" Birotteau asked himself, quite bewildered by the stir and bustle in this factory, where so much brain-power was at work furnishing daily bread for the camp of the Opposition; this theatre where rehearsals of the grand tragi-comedy played by the Left were wont to take place.

On one hand he heard a discussion relative to a loan that was being negotiated to complete the construction of the principal lines of canal recommended by the Department of Roads and Bridges; a question of millions! On the other, journalists, the bankers' jackals, were talking of yesterday's sitting and of their patron's *extempore* speech. During the two hours while he waited, he saw the banker-politician thrice emerge from his cabinet, accompanying some visitor of importance for a few paces through the ante-chamber. Keller went as far as the door with the last—General Foy.

"It is all over with me!" Birotteau said to himself, and something clutched at his heart.

As the great banker returned to his cabinet, the whole troop of courtiers, friends, and followers crowded after him, like the canine race about some attractive female of the species. One or two bolder curs slipped in spite of him into the audience chamber. The conferences lasted for five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour. Some went away visibly chop-fallen; some with a satisfied look; some assumed important airs. Time went by, and Birotteau looked anxiously at the clock. No one paid the slightest attention to the man with a secret care, sighing restlessly in the gilded chair by the

hearth, at the very door of the closet that contained that panacea for all troubles—credit.

Dolefully César thought how that he too in his own house, and for a little while, had been a king, as this man was, morning after morning; and he fathomed the depths of the abyss into which he was falling. He had bitter thoughts! How many unshed tears were crowded into those two hours! How many petitions he put up that this man might incline a favorable ear; for beneath the husk of popularity-seeking good-nature, Birotteau instinctively felt that there lurked in Keller an insolent, tyrannous, and violent temper, a brutal craving to domineer, which alarmed his meek nature. At length, when but ten or a dozen people were left, Birotteau determined to start up when the outer door of the audience chamber creaked on its hinges, and to put himself on a level with the great public speaker with the remark, "I am Birotteau!" The first grenadier who flung himself into the redoubt at Borodino did not display more courage than the perfumer when he made up his mind to carry out this manœuvre.

"After all," said he to himself, "I am his deputy-mayor," and he rose to give his name.

François Keller's countenance took on an amiable expression; clearly he meant to be civil; he glanced at Birotteau's red ribbon, turned, opened the door of his cabinet, and indicated the way; but stayed behind himself for a while to speak with two newcomers who sprang up the staircase with tempestuous speed.

"Decazes would like to speak with you," said one of these two.

"It is a question of making an end of the Pavillon Marsan! The King sees clearly. He is coming over to us!" cried the other.

"We will all go to the Chambers," returned the banker, and he entered his cabinet with the air of the frog that would fain be an ox.

"How can he think of his own affairs?" thought César, overwhelmed.

The radiance of the sun of superiority dazzled the perfumer, as the light blinds those insects which can only exist in the shade or in the dusk of a summer night.

Birotteau saw a copy of the Budget lying on a vast table, among piles of pamphlets and volumes of the *Moniteur,* which lay open, displaying marked passages, past utterances of a Minister, which were shortly to be hurled at his head; he was to be made to eat his words amid the plaudits of a crowd of dunces, incapable of comprehending that events modify everything. On another table stood a collection of boxes full of papers, a heap of memorials and projects, the thousand and one reports confided to a man in whose exchequer every nascent industry endeavors to dip.

The regal splendor of the cabinet, filled with pictures and statues and works of art; the litter on the chimney-piece; the accumulations of documents relating to business concerns at home and abroad, heaped up like bales of goods,—all these things impressed Birotteau; he dwindled in his own eyes, his nervousness increased, the blood ran cold in his veins.

On François Keller's desk there lay some bundles of bills, letters of exchange, and circular-letters. To these the great man addressed himself; and as he swiftly put his signature to those that required no examination, "To what do I owe the honor of your visit, sir?" asked he.

At these words addressed to him alone, by the voice that spoke to all Europe, while the restless hand never ceased to traverse the paper, the poor perfumer felt as if a red-hot iron had been thrust through his vitals. His face forthwith assumed that ingratiating expression with which the banker had grown familiar during ten years of experience; the expression always meant that the wearers desired to involve the house of Keller in some affair of great importance to the would-be borrowers and to no one else, an expression which shuts the banker's doors upon them at once. So François Keller shot a glance at César, a Napoleonic glance, which seemed to go through the perfumer's head. This imitation of their Emperor was a slight piece of affectation which certain

parvenus permitted themselves, though the false coin was scarcely a passable copy of the true. For César, of the extreme Right in politics, the fanatical partisan of the Government, the factor in the monarchical election, that glance was like the stamp which a custom-house officer sets on a bale of goods.

"I do not want to take up your minutes unduly, sir; I will be brief. I have come on a simple matter of private business, to know if you will open a loan account with me. As an ex-judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, and a man well known at the Bank of France, you can understand that if I had bills to discount I should only have to apply to the Bank where you are a Governor. I have had the honor of being associated in my functions at the Tribunal with M. le Baron Thibon, the head of the bill-discounting department, and he certainly would not refuse me. But as I have never tried to borrow money nor accepted a bill, my signature is unknown, and you know how many difficulties lie in the way of negotiating a loan in such a case——"

Keller moved his head; and Birotteau, construing this as a sign of impatience, continued:

"The fact is, sir, that I have engaged in a speculation in land, outside my own line of business——"

François Keller, still signing and reading, and, to all appearance, paying no attention to César's remarks, turned at this, with a sign that he was following what was said. Birotteau took heart: his affair was in a promising way, he thought; he breathed more freely.

"Go on; I understand," said Keller good-humoredly.

"I am the purchaser of one-half of the building-land near the Madeleine."

"Yes. I heard from Nucingen of the big affair that the firm of Claparon is negotiating."

"Well," the perfumer went on, "a loan of a hundred thousand francs, secured on my share of the land, or on my business, would suffice to tide me over until I can touch the profits which must shortly accrue from a venture in my own way of

business. If necessary, I would cover the amount by bills drawn on a new firm—Popinot & Company, a young house which——"

Keller seemed to be very little interested in this description of the firm of Popinot, and Birotteau gathered that he had somehow taken a wrong turn; he stopped; then, in dismay at the pause, he went on again.

"As for the interest, we——"

"Yes, yes," said the banker; "the thing may be arranged, and do not doubt my desire to meet you in the matter. Occupied as I am, I have all the finances of Europe on my hands, and the Chamber absorbs every moment of my time, so you will not be surprised to hear that I leave the investigation of a vast amount of regular business to my managers. Go downstairs, and see my brother Adolphe; explain the nature of your guarantees to him; and if he assents, return here with him to-morrow or the day after, at the time when I look into affairs of this kind, at five o'clock in the morning. We shall be proud and happy to receive your confidence; you are one of the consistent Royalists; and your esteem is the more flattering, since that politically we may find ourselves at enmity."

"Sir," said the perfumer, elated by this oratorical flourish, "I am as deserving of the honor you do me as of the signal mark of Royal favor . . . not unmerited by the discharge of my functions at the Consular Tribunal, and by fighting for——"

"Yes," continued the banker, "the reputation which you enjoy is a passport, M. Birotteau. You are sure to propose nothing that is not feasible, and you can reckon upon our cooperation."

A door, which Birotteau had not noticed, was opened, and a woman entered; it was Mme. Keller, one of the two daughters of the Comte de Gondreville, a peer of France.

"I hope I shall see you, dear, before you go to the Chamber," said she.

"It is two o'clock," exclaimed the banker; "the battle has begun. Excuse me, sir,—the question is one of upsetting a

ministry——" he went as far as the door of the salon with the perfumer, and bade a man in livery, "Take this gentleman to M. Adolphe."

Birotteau traversed a labyrinth of staircases on the way to a private office, less sumptuous than the cabinet of the head of the firm, but more business-like in appearance; he was borne along by an *if*, that easiest pacing mount that hope can furnish; he stroked his chin, and thought that the great man's compliments augured excellently well for his plans. It was regrettable that a man so amiable, so capable, so great an orator, should be inimical to the Bourbons.

Still full of these illusions, he entered M. Adolphe Keller's sanctum, a bare, chilly-looking room. Dingy curtains hung in the windows, the floor was covered with a much-worn carpet, and the furniture consisted of a couple of cylinder desks and one or two office chairs. This cabinet was to the first as the kitchen to the dining-room, as the factory to the shop. Here matters of business were penetrated to the core, here enterprises were analyzed, and preliminary charges levied by the bank on all promising undertakings. Here originated all those bold strokes for which the Kellers were so well known in the highest commercial regions, when they would secure and rapidly exploit a monopoly in a few days. Here, too, omissions on the part of the legislature received careful attention, and unblushing demands were made for "sops in the pan" (in the language of the Stock Exchange), that is to say, for money paid in consideration for small indefinable services, for standing godfather to an infant enterprise, and so accrediting it. Here were woven those tissues of fraud after a legal pattern, which consist in investing money as a sleeping-partner in some concern in temporary difficulties, with a view to slaughtering the affair as soon as it succeeds; the brothers would lie in wait, call in their capital at a critical moment, an ugly manœuvre that put the whole thing in their own hands, and involved the hapless active partner in their toils.

The two brothers adopted separate *rôles*. On high stood

François, the politician, the man of brilliant parts; he bore himself like a king, he distributed favors and promises, he made himself agreeable to every one. Everything was easy when you spoke with him; he did business royally; he poured out the heady wine of fair words, which intoxicated inexperienced speculators and promoters of new schemes; he developed their own ideas for them. But Adolphe below absolved his brother on the score of political preoccupations, and cleverly raked in the winnings; he was the responsible brother, the one who was hard to persuade; so that there were two words to every bargain concluded with that treacherous house, and not seldom the gracious Yes of the sumptuous cabinet was transmuted into a dry No in Adolphe's office.

This manœuvre of delay gained time for reflection, and often served to amuse less skilful competitors.

Adolphe Keller was chatting with the famous Palma, the trusted counselor of the house, who withdrew as Birotteau came in. The perfumer explained his errand; and Adolphe, the more cunning of the two brothers, lynx-natured, keen-eyed, thin-lipped, hard-favored, listened to him with lowered head, watching the applicant over his spectacles, eyeing him the while with what must be called the banker's gaze, in which there is something of the vulture, something of the attorney; a gaze at once covetous and cold, clear and inscrutable, sombre and ablaze with light.

"Will you be so good as to send me the documents relative to this Madeleine affair," said he, "since therein lies the guarantee of the account; they must be examined into before we begin to discuss the case on its merits. If the affair is satisfactory, we might possibly, to avoid encumbering you, be content to take part of the profits instead of discount."

"Come," said Birotteau to himself, as he went home again, "I see his drift. Like the hunted beaver, I must part with some of my skin. It is better to loose your fleece than to lose your life."

He went upstairs in high spirits, and his mirth had a genuine ring.

"I am saved," he told Césarine; "Keller will open a loan account with me."

But not until the 29th of December could Birotteau gain admittance a second time to Adolphe Keller's office. On the occasion of his first call, Adolphe was six leagues away from Paris, looking at some property which the great orator had a mind to buy. The next time both the Kellers were closeted together, and could see no one that morning; it was a question of a tender for a loan proposed by the Chambers, and they begged M. Birotteau to return on the following Friday. These delays were heartbreaking to the perfumer; but Friday came at last, and Birotteau sat by the fire in the office, with the daylight falling full on his face, and Adolphe Keller, sitting opposite, was saying, as he held up the notarial deeds, "These are all right, sir; but what proportion of the purchase-money have you paid?"

"A hundred and forty thousand francs."

"In money?"

"In bills.

"Have they been met?"

"They have not fallen due."

"But suppose that you have given more for the land than it is actually worth (taking it at its present value), where is our guarantee? We should have no security but the good opinion which you inspire and the esteem in which you are held. Business is not based on sentiment. If you had paid two hundred thousand francs, supposing that you have given too much by a hundred thousand francs to get possession of the land, we should in that case have at any rate a guarantee of a hundred thousand francs for the hundred thousand you want to borrow. The result for us would be that we should be owners of the land in your place, by paying your share; in that case we must know if it is a good piece of business. For if we are to wait five years to double our capital, it would be better to put the money out to interest through the bank. So many things may happen. You want to draw an accommodation bill to meet your bills when they fall due? It is a

risky thing to do! You go back to take a leap better. This is not in our way of business."

For Birotteau, it was as if the executioner had touched his shoulder with the branding-iron. He lost his head.

"Let us see," said Adolphe, "my brother takes a warm interest in you; he spoke of you to me. Let us look into your affairs," he added, and he glanced at the perfumer with the expression of a courtesan pressed for a quarter's rent.

Birotteau became a Molineux, and acted the part of the man at whom he had laughed so loftily. Kept in play by the banker, who took a pleasure in unwinding the skein of the poor man's thoughts, and showed himself as expert in the art of examining a merchant as the elder Popinot was skilled in unloosing a criminal's tongue, César told the story of his business career; he brought the Pâte des Sultanes and the Toilet Lotion upon the scene; he gave a complete account of his dealings with Roguin, and, finally, of the lawsuit with regard to that mortgage from which he had reaped no benefit. He saw Keller's musing smile and jerk of the head from time to time, and said to himself, "He is giving an ear to me! He is interested; I shall have my loan!" and Adolphe Keller was laughing at Birotteau, as Birotteau himself had laughed at Molineux. Carried away by the impulse of loquacity peculiar to those people on whom misfortune has an intoxicating effect, César showed himself as he really was; he helped the banker to take his measure when he suggested as his final expedient the Cephalic Oil and the firm of Popinot by way of a guarantee. Led away by a delusive hope, he allowed Adolphe Keller to fathom him and examine into his affairs, until Adolphe Keller saw in the man before him a Royalist blockhead on the brink of bankruptcy. Then, delighted at the prospect of this failure of the deputy-mayor of his arrondissement, of a man whose party was in power, who had been but lately decorated, Adolphe told Birotteau plainly that he could neither open a loan account with him, nor speak on his behalf to the orator brother, the great François. If François were inclined to extend an imbecile gener-

osity to a political adversary, and to come to the aid of a man who held opinions diametrically opposed to his own, he, Adolphe, had no mind that his brother should be a dupe; he would do all that in him lay to prevent his brother from holding out a helping hand to one of Napoleon's old antagonists, to a man who was wounded at Saint-Roch. Birotteau, exasperated at this, tried to say something about covetousness in the high places of the financial world, of hard-heartedness and sham philanthropy; but he was overcome with such terrible distress, that he could scarcely stammer out a few words about the institution of the Bank of France, to which the Kellers had recourse.

"But the Bank of France will never make an advance which a private bank declines," said Adolphe Keller.

"It has always seemed to me," said Birotteau, "that the Bank was not fulfilling the purpose for which it was established, when the governors congratulate themselves on a balance-sheet in which they have only lost one or two hundred thousand francs in transactions with the mercantile world of Paris; it is the province of the Bank to watch over and foster trade."

Adolphe began to smile, and rose to his feet like a man who is bored.

"If the Bank began to finance all the men in difficulties on 'Change, where rascality congregates in the slipperiest places of the financial world, the Bank would file her schedule before a year was out. The Bank is hard put to it as it is to guard against accommodation bills and fraudulent letters of exchange, and how would it be possible to examine into the affairs of every one who should be minded to apply for assistance?"

"I want ten thousand francs for to-morrow, Saturday the 30th; and where are they to come from?" Birotteau asked himself, as he crossed the court.

When the 31st is a holiday, payment is due on the 30th, according to custom. César's eyes were so full of tears that, as he reached the great gateway, he scarcely saw a handsome

English horse, covered with foam, that pulled up sharply at the gate, and one of the neatest cabriolets to be seen in the streets of Paris. He would fain have been run over by the cabriolet; it would be an accidental death, and the confusion in his affairs would have been set down to the suddenness of the catastrophe. He did not recognize du Tillet's slender figure in faultless morning dress, or see him fling the reins to his servant and put a rug over the back of the thoroughbred.

"What brings *you* here?" asked du Tillet, addressing his old master.

Du Tillet knew quite well why Birotteau had come. The Kellers had made inquiries of Claparon, and Claparon, taking his cue from du Tillet, had blighted the perfumer's old-established business reputation. The tears in the unlucky merchant's eyes told the tale sufficiently plainly, in spite of his sudden effort to keep them back.

"Perhaps you have been asking these Turks to oblige you in some way," said du Tillet, "cut-throats of commerce that they are, who have played many a mean trick; they will make a corner in indigo, for instance; they lower rice, forcing holders to sell cheap, so that they can get the game into their own hands and control the market; they are inhuman pirates, who know neither law, nor faith, nor conscience. You cannot know what things they are capable of doing. They will open a loan account with you if you have some promising bit of business; and as soon as you have gone too far to draw back, they will pull you up and put pressure upon you till you make the whole affair over to them for next to nothing. Pretty stories they could tell you at Havre and Bordeaux and Marseilles about the Kellers! Politics are a cloak that cover a lot of dirty doings, I can tell you! So I make them useful without scruple. Let us take a turn or two, my dear Birotteau. —Joseph, walk the horse up and down, he is overheated, and a thousand crowns is a big investment in horse-flesh."

He turned towards the Boulevard.

"Now, my dear master (for you used to be my master), is it money that you need? And they have asked you for secur-

ity, the wretches! Well, for my own part, I know you; and I can offer to give you cash against your bills. I have made my money honorably, and with unheard-of toil. I went in quest of fortune to Germany! At this time of day, I may tell you this—that I bought up the King's debts there for forty per cent of their value; your guarantee was very useful to me then, and I am grateful. If you want ten thousand francs, they are at your service."

"What! du Tillet," cried César, "do you really mean it? Are you not making game of me? Yes, I am a little pressed for money, just for the moment——"

"I know; Roguin's affair," returned du Tillet. "Eh! yes. I myself have been let in there for ten thousand francs, which the old rogue borrowed of me to run away with; but Mme. Roguin will repay the money out of her claims on his estate. I advised her, poor thing, not to be so foolish as to give up her fortune to pay debts contracted for a mistress; it would be very well if she could pay them all, but how is she to make distinctions in favor of this or that creditor, to the prejudice of others? You are no Roguin; I know you," continued du Tillet; "you would rather blow your brains out than cause me to lose a sou. Here we are in the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin; come up and see me."

It pleased the young upstart to take his old employer, not through the offices, but by way of the private entry, and to walk deliberately, so as to give him a full view of a handsome and luxuriously furnished dining-room, adorned with pictures bought in Germany; through two drawing-rooms, more splendid and elegant than any rooms that Birotteau had yet seen save in the Duc de Lenoncourt's house. The good citizen was dazzled by the gilding, the works of art, the costly knickknacks, precious vases, and countless little details. All the glories of Constance's rooms paled before this display, and knowing, as he did, the cost of his own extravagance—"Where can he have found all these millions?" said he to himself.

Then they entered a bedroom, which as much surpassed his

wife's as the mansion of a great singer at the Opéra surpasses the third-floor dwelling of some supernumerary. The ceiling was covered with violet satin relieved with silken folds of white, and the white fur of an ermine rug beside the bed brought out in contrast all the violet tints of a carpet from the Levant. The furniture and the accessories were novel in form, and exhibited the very refinement of extravagance. Birotteau stopped in front of an exquisite timepiece, with a Cupid and Psyche upon it, a replica of one which had just been made for a celebrated banker. At length master and assistant reached a cabinet, the dainty sanctum of a fashionable dandy, redolent rather of love than of finance. It was Mme. Roguin, doubtless, who, in her gratitude for the care and thought given to her fortune, had bestowed, by way of a thank-offering, the paper-cutter of wrought gold, the carved malachite paper-weights, and all the costly gewgaws of unbridled luxury. The carpet, one of the richest products of the Belgian loom, was as great a surprise to the eyes as its soft, thick pile to the tread. Du Tillet drew a chair to the fire for the poor dazzled and bewildered perfumer.

"Will you breakfast with me?" He rang the bell; it was answered by a servant, who was better dressed than the visitor.

"Ask M. Legras to come up, and then tell Joseph to return, you will find him at the door of Keller's bank; and you can go to Adolphe Keller's house, and say that instead of seeing him now, I shall wait till he goes on 'Change. Send up breakfast, and be quick about it."

This talk dazed the perfumer.

"So he, du Tillet, makes that formidable Adolphe Keller come to him at his whistle, as if he were a dog!"

A hop-o'-my-thumb of a page came in and spread a table so slender, that it had escaped Birotteau's notice, setting thereon a Strasbourg pie, a bottle of Bordeaux wine, and various luxuries which did not appear on Birotteau's table twice in a quarter, on high days and holidays. Du Tillet was enjoying himself. His feeling of hatred for the one man who

had a right to despise him diffused itself like a warm glow through his veins, till the sight of Birotteau stirred in the depths of his nature the same sensations that the spectacle of a sheep struggling for its life against a tiger might give. A generous thought flashed across him; he asked himself whether he had not carried his vengeance far enough; he hesitated between the counsels of a newly-awakened pity and those of a hate grown drowsy.

"Commercially speaking, I can annihilate the man," he thought; "I have power of life and death over him, over his wife, who kept me on the rack, and his daughter, whose hand once seemed to me to grasp a wholé fortune. I have his money as it is, so let us be content to let the poor simpleton swim to the end of his tether, which I shall hold."

But honest folk are wanting in tact; they do what seems good to them without calculating its effect on others, because they themselves are straightforward, and have no after-thoughts. So Birotteau filled up the measure of his own misfortune; he irritated the tiger; all unwittingly he sent a shaft home, and made an implacable enemy of him at a word, by his praise, by giving expression to his honest thoughts, by the sheer light-heartedness which is the gift of a blameless conscience. The cashier came in; and du Tillet said, looking towards César, "M. Legras, bring me ten thousand francs in cash, and a bill for the amount payable to my order in ninety days by this gentleman, who is M. Birotteau, as you know."

Du Tillet waited on his guest, and poured out a glass of Bordeaux wine for him; and Birotteau, who thought himself saved, laughed convulsively, fingered his watch-chain, and did not touch the food until his ex-assistant said, "You do not eat." In this way he laid bare the depths of the gulf into which du Tillet's hand had plunged him, while the hand which had drawn him out was still stretched over him, and might yet plunge him back again. When the cashier returned, and the bill had been accepted, and César felt the ten bank-notes in his pocket, he could no longer contain his joy. But a moment ago the news that he could not meet his engagements

seemed to be about to be published abroad through his Quarter, the Bank must know it, he must confess that he was ruined to his wife; now everything was safe! The joy of his deliverance was as keen as the torture of impending bankruptcy had been. Tears filled the poor man's eyes in spite of himself.

"What can be the matter, my dear master?" asked du Tillet. "Would you not do to-morrow for me what I am doing to-day for you? Isn't is as simple as saying good-day?"

"Du Tillet," said the worthy man, with solemn emphasis, as he rose and took his ex-assistant by the hand, "I restore you to your old place in my esteem."

"What! had I forfeited it?" asked du Tillet; and, for all his prosperity, he felt this rude home-thrust, and his color rose.

"Forfeited . . . not exactly that," said Birotteau, thunderstruck by his folly; "people talked about you and Mme. Roguin. The devil! another man's wife . . ."

"You are beating about the bush, old boy," thought du Tillet, in an old phrase learned in his earlier days.

And even as that thought crossed his mind, he returned to his old design. He would lay this virtue low, he would trample it under foot: all Paris should point the finger of scorn at the honest and honorable man who had caught him, du Tillet, with his hand in the till. Every hatred of every kind, political or private, between woman and woman, or between man and man, dates from some similar detection. There is no cause for hate in compromised interests, in a wound, nor even in a box on the ear; such injuries as these are not irreparable. But to be found out in some base piece of iniquity, to be caught in the act! . . . The duel that ensues between the criminal and the discoverer of the crime cannot but be to the death.

"Oh! Mme. Roguin," said du Tillet laughingly, "but isn't that rather a feather in a young man's cap? I understand you, my dear master, they must have told you that she lent me money. Well, on the contrary, it is I who have re-established

her finances, which were curiously involved in her husband's affairs. My fortune has been honestly made, as I have just told you. I had nothing, as you know. Young men sometimes find themselves in terrible straits, and in dire need one may strain a point; but if, like the Republic, one has made a forced loan now and again, why, one returns it afterwards, and is as honest as France herself."

"Just so," said César. "My boy—God—Isn't it Voltaire who says:

" He made of repentance the virtue of mortals?"

"So long as one does not take his neighbor's money in a base and cowardly way," du Tillet continued, smarting once more under this application of verse; "as if you, for instance, were to fail before the three months are out, and it would be all up with my ten thousand francs——"

"I fail?" cried Birotteau (he had taken three glasses of wine, and happiness had gone to his head). "My opinions of bankruptcy are well known. A failure is commercial death. I should die."

"Long life to you!" said du Tillet.

"To your prosperity!" returned the perfumer. "Why do you not come to me for your perfumery?"

"Upon my word," said du Tillet, "I confess that I am afraid to meet Mme. César, she always made an impression upon me; and if you were not my master, faith, I——"

"Oh! you are not the first who has thought her handsome, and wanted her, but she loves me! Well, du Tillet, my friend, do not do things by halves."

"What!"

Birotteau explained the affair of the building-land, and du Tillet opened his eyes, complimented César upon his acumen and foresight, and spoke highly of the prospects.

"Oh, well, I am much pleased to have your approbation; you are supposed to have one of the longest heads in the banking line, du Tillet! You can negotiate a loan from the Bank of France for me until the Cephalic Oil has made its way."

"I can send you to the firm of Nucingen," answered du Tillet, inwardly vowing that his victim should dance the whole mazy round of bankruptcy. He sat down to his desk to write the following letter to the Baron de Nucingen:

"My dear Baron,—The bearer of this letter is M. César Birotteau, deputy-mayor of the second arrondissement, and one of the best known manufacturing perfumers in Paris. He desires to be put in communication with you; you need not hesitate to do anything that he asks of you, and by obliging him you oblige your friend,

"F. du Tillet."

Du Tillet put no dot over the *i* in his name. Among his business associates this clerical error was a sign which they all understood, and it was always made of set purpose; it annulled the heartiest recommendations, the warmest praise and instance in the body of the letter. On receiving such a note as this, where the very exclamation-marks breathed entreaty, in which du Tillet, figuratively speaking, went down on his knees, his associates knew that the writer had been unable to refuse the letter which was to be regarded as null and void. At sight of that undotted *i*, the receiver of the letter forthwith dismissed the applicant with empty compliments and vain promises. Not a few men of considerable reputation in the world are put off like children by this trick; for men of business, bankers, bill-discounters, and advocates have one and all two methods of signing their names; one is a dead letter, the other living. The shrewdest are deceived by it. You must have felt the double effect of a cold communication and a warm one to discover the stratagem.

"You are saving me, du Tillet," said César, as he read the present specimen.

"Oh dear me," said du Tillet, "just ask Nucingen for the money, and when he has read my letter he will let you have all that you want. Unluckily, my own capital is locked up at present, or I would not send you to the prince of bankers,

for the Kellers are dwarfs compared with Nucingen. He is a second Law. With my bill of exchange, you will be ready for the 15th, and after that we will see. Nucingen and I are the best friends in the world; he would not disoblige me for a million."

"It is as good as a guarantee," said Birotteau to himself, and as he went away his heart thrilled with gratitude for du Tillet. "Ah, well," he thought, "a good deed never loses its reward," and he fell incontinently to moralizing. Yet there was one bitter drop in his cup of happiness. He had, it is true, prevented his wife from looking into the ledgers for several days. Célestin must undertake the bookkeeping in addition to his work, with some help from his master; he could have wished his wife and daughter to remain upstairs in possession of the beautiful rooms which he had arranged and furnished for them; but when the first little glow of enjoyment was over, Mme. César would have died sooner than renounce the personal supervision of the details of the business, "the handle of the frying-pan," to use her own expression.

Birotteau was at his wits' end; he had done everything that he could think of to conceal the symptoms of his embarrassment from her eyes. Constance had strongly disapproved of sending in the accounts; she had scolded the assistants, and asked Célestin if he meant to ruin the house, believing that the idea was Célestin's own. And Célestin meekly bore the blame by Birotteau's orders. In the assistant's opinion, Mme. César governed the perfumer; and though it is possible to deceive the public, those of the household always know who is the real power in it. The confession was bound to come, and that soon, for du Tillet's loan would appear in the books, and must be accounted for.

As Birotteau came in at the door he saw, not without a shudder, that Constance was at her post, going through the amounts due to be paid, and doubtless balancing the books.

"How will you pay these to-morrow?" she asked in his ear, when he took his place beside her.

"With money," he replied, drawing the banknotes from his pocket, with a sign to Célestin to take them.

"But where do those notes come from?"

"I will tell you the whole story to-night.—Célestin, enter in the bill-book a bill for ten thousand francs due at the end of March, to order of du Tillet."

"Du Tillet!" echoed Constance, terror-stricken.

"I am just going to Popinot," said César. "It is too bad of me; I have not been round to see him yet. Is his oil selling?"

"The three hundred bottles which he brought are all sold out."

"Birotteau, do not go out again; I have something to say to you," said Constance. She caught her husband's arm, and drew him to her room in a hurry, which, under any other circumstances, would have been ludicrous.—"Du Tillet!" she exclaimed, when the husband and wife were together, and she had made sure that there was no one but Césarine present; "Du Tillet robbed us of three thousand francs! And you are doing business with du Tillet! A monster who—who tried to seduce me," she said in his ear.

"A bit of boyish folly," said Birotteau, suddenly transformed into a free thinker.

"Listen to me, Birotteau; you are falling out of your old ways; you never go to the factory now. There is something, I can feel it. Tell me about it; I want to know everything."

"Well, then," said Birotteau, "we have nearly been ruined; we were ruined, in fact, this very morning, but everything is set straight again," and he told the dreadful story of the past two weeks.

"So that was the cause of your illness!" exclaimed Constance.

"Yes, mamma," cried Césarine. "Father has been very brave, I am sure. If I were loved as he loves you, I would not wish more. He thought of nothing but your trouble."

"My dream has come true," said the poor wife, and pale, haggard, and terror-stricken, she sank down upon the sofa

by the fireside. "I foresaw all this. I told you so that fatal night, in the old room which you have pulled down; we shall have nothing left but our eyes to cry over our losses. Poor Césarine, I——"

"Come, now; so that is what you say!" cried Birotteau. "I stand in need of courage, and are you damping it!"

"Forgive me, dear," said Constance, grasping César's hand in hers, with a tender pressure that went to the poor man's heart. "I was wrong; the misfortune has befallen us, I will be dumb, resigned, and strong to bear it. No, César, you shall never hear a complaint from me."

She sprang into César's arms, and said, while her tears fell fast, "Take courage, dear. I should have courage enough for two, if it were needed."

"There is the Oil, dear wife; the Oil will save us."

"May God protect us!" cried Constance.

"Will not Anselme come to father's assistance?" asked Césarine.

"I will go to him now," exclaimed César, his wife's heart-breaking tone had been too much for his feelings; it seemed that he did not know her yet, after nineteen years of married life. "Do not be afraid, Constance; there is no fear now. Here, read M. du Tillet's letter to M. de Nucingen; he is sure to lend us the money. Between then and now I shall have gained my lawsuit. Besides," he added (a lying hope to fit the circumstances), "there is your uncle Pillerault. Courage is all that is wanted."

"If that were all!" said Constance, smiling.

Birotteau, with the great weight taken off his mind, walked like a man set free from prison; but within himself he felt the indefinable exhaustion consequent on mental exertion which has made heavy demands upon the nervous system, and required more than the daily allowance of will-power; he was conscious of the deficit when a man has drawn, as it were, on the capital of his vitality. Birotteau was growing old already.

Popinot's shop in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants had under-

gone great changes in the last two months. It had been repainted. The rows of bottles ensconced in the pigeon-hole shelves, touched up with paint, rejoiced the eyes of every merchant who knows the signs of prosperity. The floor of the shop was covered with packing-paper. The warehouse contained certain casks of oil, for which the devoted Gaudissart had procured an agency for Popinot. The books were kept upstairs in the counting-house. An old servant had been installed as housekeeper to Popinot and his three assistants.

Popinot himself, penned in a cash-desk in the corner of the shop screened off by a glass partition, was usually arrayed in a green baize apron and a pair of green-cloth over-sleeves, when he was not buried, as at this moment, in a pile of papers. The post had just come in, and Popinot, with a pen behind his ear, was taking in handfuls of business letters and orders, when at the words, "Well, my boy?" he raised his head, saw his late employer, locked his cash-desk, and came forward joyously. The tip of the young man's nose was red, for there was no fire in the shop, and the door stood open.

"I began to fear that you were never coming to see me," he answered respectfully.

The assistants hurried in, eager to see the great man of the perfumery trade, their own master's partner, the deputy-mayor who wore the red ribbon. César was flattered by this mute homage, and he who had felt so small in the Kellers' bank must needs imitate the Kellers. He stroked his chin, raised himself on tiptoe once or twice with an air, and poured forth his commonplaces.

"Well, my dear fellow, are you up early in the mornings?" asked he.

"No, we don't always go to bed," said Popinot; "one must succeed by hook or by crook."

"Well, what did I tell you? My Oil is a fortune."

"Yes, sir; but the method of selling it counts for something; I have given your diamond a worthy setting."

"As a matter of fact," said the perfumer, "how are we getting on? Have any profits been made?"

"At the end of a month!" cried Popinot. "Did you expect it? My friend Gaudissart has not been gone much more than three weeks. He took a post-chaise without telling me about it. Oh! he has thrown himself into this. We shall owe a good deal to my uncle! The newspapers will cost us twelve thousand francs," he added in Birotteau's ear.

"The newspapers . . .!" cried the deputy-mayor.

"Have you not seen them?"

"No."

"Then you know nothing of this," said Popinot. "Twenty thousand francs in placards, frames, and prints! . . . A hundred thousand bottles paid for! . . . Oh! it is nothing but sacrifice at this moment. We are bringing out the Oil on a large scale. If you had stepped over to the Faubourg, where I have often been at work all night, you would have seen a little contrivance of mine for cracking the nuts, which is not to be sneezed at. For my own part, during the last five days I have made three thousand francs in commission on the druggists' oils."

"What a good head!" said Birotteau, laying his hand on little Popinot's hair, and stroking it as if the young man had been a little child. "I foresaw how it would be."

Several people came into the shop.

"Good-bye till Sunday; we are going to dine then with your aunt, Mme. Ragon," said Birotteau, and he left Popinot to his own affairs. Evidently the roast which he had scented was not yet ready to carve.—"How extraordinary it is! An assistant becomes a merchant in twenty-four hours," he thought, and Birotteau was as much taken aback by Popinot's prosperity and self-possession as by du Tillet's luxurious rooms. "Here is Anselme drawing himself up a bit when I put my hand on his head, as if he were a François Keller already."

It did not occur to Birotteau that the assistants were looking on, and that the head of an establishment must preserve his dignity in his own house. Here, as in du Tillet's case the good man had made a blunder in the kindness of his

heart, and the real feeling expressed in that homely familiar way would have mortified any one but Anselme.

The Sunday dinner-party at the Ragons' house was destined to be the last festivity in the nineteen years of César's married life, the life which had been so completely happy. The Ragons lived on the second floor of a quaint and rather stately old house in the Rue du Petit-Bourbon-Saint-Sulpice. Over the paneled walls of their rooms danced eighteenth century shepherdesses in hooped petticoats, amid browsing eighteenth century sheep; and the old people themselves belonged to the bourgeoisie of that bygone eighteenth century, with its solemn gravity, its quaint habits and customs, its respectful attitude to the noblesse, its loyal devotion to Church and King.

The timepieces, the linen, the plates and dishes, all the furniture in fact had such an old-world air, that by very reason of its antiquity it seemed new. The sitting-room, hung with brocatelle damask curtains, contained a collection of "duchesse" chairs and what-nots; and from the wall a superb Popinot, Mme. Ragon's father, the alderman of Sancerre, painted by Latour, smiled down upon the room like a parvenu in all his glory. Mme. Ragon at home was incomplete without her tiny King Charles, who reposed with marvelous effect on her hard little *rococo* sofa, a piece of furniture which certainly had never played the part of Crébillon's sofa.

Among the Ragons' many virtues, the possession of old wines arrived at perfect maturity was by no means the least endearing; to say nothing of certain liqueurs of Mme. Anfoux's, brought from the West Indies by the lovely Mme. Ragon's admirers, sufficiently dogged to love on without hope (so it was said). Wherefore the Ragons' little dinners were highly appreciated. Jeannette, the old cook, served the two old folk with a blind devotion; for them she would have stolen fruit to make preserves; and so far from investing her money in the savings-bank, she prudently put it in the lottery, hoping one day to carry home the great prize to her master and mistress. In spite of her sixty years, Jeannette, on Sundays

when they had company, superintended the dishes in the kitchen, and waited at table with a deft quickness which would have given hints to Mlle. Contat as Suzanne in the *Marriage of Figaro.*

This time the guests were ten in number—the elder Popinot, Uncle Pillerault, Anselme, César and his wife and daughter, the three Matifats, and the Abbé Loraux. Mme. Matifat, first introduced arrayed for the dance in her turban, now wore a gown of blue velvet, thick cotton stockings, kid slippers, green-fringed chamois leather gloves, and a hat lined with pink, and adorned with blossoming auriculas.

Every one had arrived by five o'clock. The Ragons used to beg their guests to be punctual; and when the good folk themselves were asked out to dinner, their friends were careful to dine at the same hour, for at the age of seventy the digestion does not take kindly to the new-fangled times and seasons ordained by fashionable society.

Césarine knew that Mme. Ragon would seat Anselme beside her; all women, even devotees, or the feeblest feminine intellects, understand each other in the matter of a love affair. The toilette of the perfumer's daughter was designed to turn young Popinot's head. Constance, who had given up, not without a pang, the idea of the notary, who for her was an heir-presumptive to a throne, had helped Césarine to dress, certain bitter reflections mingling with her thoughts the while. Foreseeing the future, she lowered the modest gauze kerchief somewhat on Césarine's shoulders, so as to display rather more of their outline, as well as the throat on which the young girl's head was set with striking grace. The bodice *à la Grecque,* four or five folds, crossing from left to right, gave short glimpses of delicately rounded contours beneath; and the leaden-gray merino gown, with its flounces trimmed with green ornaments, clearly defined a shape which had never seemed so slender and so lissome. Gold filagree earrings hung from her ears. Her hair, dressed high *à la Chinoise,* was drawn back from her face, so that the delicate freshness of its surface and the dim tracery of the veins which

suffused the white velvet with the purest glow of life, was apparent at a glance. Indeed, Césarine was so coquettishly lovely, that Mme. Matifat could not help saying so, without perceiving that the mother and daughter had felt the necessity of bewitching young Popinot.

Neither Birotteau, nor his wife, nor Mme. Matifat, nor any one else, broke in upon the delicious talk between the two young people; love glowed within them as they spoke with lowered voices in the draughty window-seat, where the cold made a miniature northeaster. Moreover, the conversation of their seniors grew animated when the elder Popinot let something drop concerning Roguin's flight, saying that this was the second notary-defaulter, and that hitherto such a thing had been unknown. Mme. Ragon had touched her brother's foot at the mention of Roguin, Pillerault had spoken aloud to cover the judge's remark, and both looked significantly from him to Mme. Birotteau.

"I know all," Constance said, and in her gentle voice there was a note of pain.

"Oh, well then," said Mme. Matifat, addressing herself to Birotteau, who humbly bent his head, "how much of your money did he run away with? To listen to the gossip, you might be ruined."

"He had two hundred thousand francs of mine. As for the forty thousand which he pretended to borrow for me from one of his clients whose money he had squandered, we are going to law about it."

"You will see that settled this coming week," said the elder Popinot. "I thought that you would not mind my explaining your position to M. le Président; he has ordered Roguin's papers to be brought into the *Chambre de Conseil;* on examination it will be discovered when the lender's capital was embezzled, and Derville's allegations can be proved or disproved. Derville is pleading in person, to save expense to you."

"Shall we gain the day?" asked Mme. Birotteau.

"I do not know," Popinot answered. "Although I belong to the Chamber before which the case will come, I shall re-

frain from deliberating upon it, even if I should be called upon to do so."

"But can there be any doubt about such a straightforward case?" asked Pillerault. "Ought not the deed to state that the money was actually paid down, and must not the notaries declare that they have seen it handed over? Roguin would go to the galleys if he fell into the hands of justice."

"In my opinion," the judge answered, "the lender should look to Roguin's caution-money and the amount paid for the practice for his remedy; but sometimes, in still simpler cases than this, the Councillors at the Court-Royal have been divided six against six."

"What is this, mademoiselle; has M. Roguin run away?" asked Popinot, overhearing at last what was being said. "M. César said nothing about it to me—to me who would give my life for him . . ."

Césarine felt that the whole family was included in that "for him"; for if the girl's inexperience had not understood the tone, she could not mistake the look that wrapped her in a rosy flame.

"I was sure of it; I told him so, but he hid it all from mother, and told his secret to no one but me."

"You spoke to him of me in this matter," said Popinot; "you read my heart, but do you read all that is there?"

"Perhaps."

"Oh! I am very happy," said Popinot. "If you will remove all my fears, in a year's time I shall be so rich that your father will not receive me so badly when I shall speak to him then of our marriage. Five hours of sleep shall be enough for me now of a night . . ."

"Do not make yourself ill," said Césarine, and no words can reproduce the tones of her voice as she gave Popinot a glance wherein all her thoughts might be read.

"Wife," said César, as they rose from table, "I think those young people are in love."

"Oh, well, so much the better," said Constance gravely: "my daughter will be the wife of a man who has a head on his

shoulders and plenty of energy. Brains are the best endowment in a marriage."

She hurried away into Mme. Ragon's room. During dinner, César had let fall several remarks which had drawn a smile from Pillerault and the judge, so plainly did they exhibit the speaker's ignorance; and it was borne in upon the unfortunate woman how little fitted her husband was to struggle with misfortune. Constance's heart was heavy with unshed tears. Instinctively she mistrusted du Tillet, for all mothers understand *timeo Danaos et dona ferentes* without learning Latin. She wept, and her daughter and Mme. Ragon, with their arms about her, could not learn the cause of her trouble.

"It is the nerves," said she.

The rest of the evening was spent over the card-table by the old people, and the younger ones played the blithe childish games styled "innocent amusements," because they cover the innocent mischief of bourgeois lovers. The Matifats joined the young people.

"César," said Constance, as they went home again, "go to M. le Baron de Nucingen some time about the 8th, so as to be sure some days beforehand that you can meet your engagements on the 15th. If there should be any hitch in your arrangements, would you raise a loan one day to pay your debts between one day and the next?"

"I will go, wife," César answered, and he grasped her hand and Césarine's in his as he added, "My darlings, I have given you bitter New Year's gifts!" And in the darkness inside the cab the two women, who could not see the poor perfumer, felt hot tears falling on their hands.

"Hope, dear," said Constance.

"Everything will go well, papa; M. Popinot told me that he would give his life for you."

"For me—and for my family; that is it, is it not?" answered César, trying to speak gaily.

Césarine pressed her father's hand in a way which told him that Anselme was her betrothed.

Two hundred cards arrived for Birotteau on New Year's Day and the two following days. This influx of tokens of favor and of false friendship is a painful thing for people who are being swept away by the current of misfortune. Three times César presented himself at the Baron de Nucingen's hôtel, and each time in vain. The New Year's festivities sufficiently excused the banker's absence. But on the last visit Birotteau went as far as the banker's private office, and learned from a German, the head clerk, that M. de Nucingen had only returned from a ball given by the Kellers at five o'clock that morning, and that he would not be visible until half-past nine. Birotteau chatted with this man for nearly half an hour, and contrived to interest the German in his affairs. So, during the day, this cabinet minister of the house of Nucingen wrote to tell César that the Baron would see him at twelve o'clock the following morning, January the 3d. Although every hour brought its drop of bitterness, that day went by with dreadful swiftness. The perfumer took a cab and drove to the hôtel; the courtyard was already blocked with carriages, and the poor honest man's heart was oppressed by the splendors of that celebrated house.

"Yet he has failed twice," he said to himself, as he went up the handsome staircase, with flowers on either side, and through the luxuriously furnished rooms by which the Baroness, Delphine de Nucingen, had made a name for herself. The Baroness strove to rival the most splendid houses in the Faubourg Saint-Germain—the houses of a circle into which as yet she had no right of entry.

The Baron and his wife were at breakfast. In spite of the number of those who were waiting in his offices for him, he said that he would see du Tillet's friends at any hour. Birotteau trembled with hope at the change which the Baron's message produced on the lackey's insolent face.

"Bardon me, my tear," said the Baron, addressing his wife, as he rose to his feet and bowed slightly to Birotteau, "dees shentleman ees ein goot Royaleest, and de indimate frient of du Dillet. Meinnesir Pirôdôt is teputy-mayor of de Second

Arrontussement, and gifs palls of Asiatic magnificence; you vill make, no doubt, his agquaintance mit bleasure."

"I should be delighted to take lessons of Mme. Birotteau, for Ferdinand——" ("Come," thought the perfumer, "she calls him Ferdinand, plump and plain")—"Ferdinand spoke of the ball to us with an admiration which says the more, because Ferdinand is very critical; everything must have been perfect. Shall you soon give another?" asked Mme. de Nucingen, with a most amiable expression.

"Madame, poor folk like us seldom amuse ourselves," answered the perfumer, doubtful whether the Baroness was laughing at him, or if her words were simply an empty compliment.

"Meinnesir Crintod suberindended de alderations in your house," said the Baron.

"Oh! Grindot! is he that nice young architect who has just come back from Rome?" asked Delphine de Nucingen. "I am quite wild about him; he is making lovely sketches for my album."

No conspirator in the hands of the executioner in the torture chamber of the Venetian Republic could have felt less at his ease in the boots than Birotteau in his ordinary clothes at that moment. Every word had for him an ironical sound.

"Ve too gif liddle palls here," the Baron continued, giving the visitor a searching glance. "Eferypody does it, you see!"

"Will M. Birotteau join us at breakfast?" asked Delphine, and indicated the luxuriously-furnished table.

"I am here on business, Mme. la Baronne, and——"

"Yes!" said the Baron, "matame, vill you bermit us to talk pizness?"

Delphine made a little gesture of assent. "Are you about to buy some perfumery?" she asked of the Baron, who shrugged his shoulders, and turned in despair to César.

"Du Dillet take de greatest inderest in you," said he.

"At last we are coming to the point," thought the hapless merchant.

"Mit his ledder, your gretid mit my house is only limited py de pounds of my own fortune . . ."

The life-giving draught which the angel bore to Hagar in the wilderness must surely have been like the dew which these outlandish words effused through Birotteau's veins. The cunning Baron clung of set purpose to the horrible accent of the German Jew, who flatters himself that he has mastered an alien tongue; for this system led to misapprehensions highly useful to him in the way of business.

"And you shall have ein gurrent aggount, dat is how we vill do it," remarked the good, the great, and venerable financier, with Alsatian geniality.

Birotteau's doubts were all laid to rest; he had had experience of business, and he knew that a man never goes into details unless he is disposed to oblige you and to carry out a plan.

"I neet not say to you that the Pank demands dree zignatures off eferypody, gif de amount is large or small. So you shall make all your pills to de order off our friend du Dillet, who vill send dem de same day to de Pank mit my zignature, and py four o'glock you shall have de amount of de pills dat you haf accept in de morning, and at Pank rate. I do not vant gommission nor discount—nor nossing; for I shall haf de bleasure of peing agreeable to you. . . . But I make one gondition!" he added, touching his nose with the forefinger of his left hand, and putting an indescribable cunning into the gesture.

"It is granted before you ask it, M. le Baron," said Birotteau, imagining that the banker meant to stipulate for a share in the profits.

"Ein gondition to vich I addach de greatest price, because I should like Montame de Nichinguenne to take, as she has said, some lessons of Montame Pirôdôt."

"M. le Baron, do not laugh at me, I beg."

"Meinnesir Pirôdôt," said the financier seriously, "it is an agreement; you are to infite us to your next pall. My wife is chealous; she would like to see your house, of vich eferypody says such great dings."

"M. le Baron!"

"Oh! if you refuse me, no loan aggount! You are in great favor. Yes! I know dat de Brefect of de Seine was go to you."

"M. le Baron!"

"You had La Pillartière, ein shentleman-in-ordinary to de King; and de goot Fentéheine, for you were wounded—at Sainte——"

"On the 13th of Vendémiaire, M. le Baron."

"You had Meinnesir de Lassebette, Meinnesir Fauqueleine of de Agademie——"

"M. le Baron!"

"Eh! *der teufel,* do not be so modest, Meester Teputy-Mayor; I haf heard dat de King said dat your pall——"

"The King?" asked Birotteau, destined to learn no more, for at this moment a young man came into the room; the sound of his footsteps, heard at a distance, had brought a bright color into Delphine de Nucingen's fair face.

"Goot-tay, my tear de Marsay," said the Baron. "Take my blace; dere are a lot of beoples in my office, dey say. Who knows why? De Mines off Wortschinne are baying two hunderd ber cent! Yes. I have receifed de aggounts. You haf a hunderd tousand francs more of ingom dis year, Montame de Nichinguenne; you could buy girdles and kew-kaws to make yourself pretty, as if you neeted dem!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Birotteau. "The Ragons have sold their shares!"

"Who may these gentlemen be?" asked the young dandy with a smile.

"Dere!" said Nucingen, who had gone as far as the door already, "it looks to me as if dose bersons. . . . Te Marsay, dis is Meinnesir Pirôdôt, your berfumer, who gifs palls mit Asiatic magnificence, and has been degoraded py de King——"

De Marsay, taking up his eyeglass, remarked, "Ah! to be sure. I thought that the face was familiar. Then are you about to perfume your affairs with some efficacious oil, to make them run smoothly?"

"Ach! vell, dose Rakkons had an aggount mit me," the Baron went on. "I put dem in de vay of ein fortune, and dey could not vait one more day for it."

"M. le Baron!" cried Birotteau.

The worthy perfumer found himself very much in the dark about his affairs, and fled after the banker without taking leave of the Baroness or of de Marsay. M. de Nucingen was on the lowest step of the stairs, but even as he reached the door of his office, Birotteau was beside him. As he turned the handle, he saw the despairing gesture of the poor creature, for whom the gulf was yawning, and said:

"Eh! it is understood, is it not? See du Dillet, and arranche it all mit him."

It occurred to Birotteau that de Marsay might have some influence with the Baron; he darted upstairs with the speed of a swallow, and slipped into the dining-room where, by rights, the Baroness and de Marsay should have been, for he had left Delphine waiting for her coffee and cream. The coffee indeed was now waiting, but the Baroness and the young dandy had vanished; the servant looked amused at Birotteau's astonishment, and there was nothing for it but to go more leisurely downstairs again. From the Nucingens' hôtel he went at once to du Tillet, only to hear that he was at Mme. Roguin's house in the country. He took a cab, and paid an extra fare to be driven to Nogent-sur-Marne as quickly as if he had traveled post. But at Nogent-sur-Marne the porter told him that *Monsieur and Madame* had set out for Paris, and Birotteau returned quite tired out.

When he told his wife and daughter the story of his excursion, he was amazed to receive the sweetest consolation and assurances that all would go well from Constance, who had always taken all the little ups and downs of business as occasions on which to utter her boding cries.

At seven o'clock the next morning, Birotteau took up his position before du Tillet's door in the dim light. He begged the porter to put him into communication with du Tillet's man, and, by dint of slipping ten francs into the porter's

hands, obtained the favor of an interview with du Tillet's man; of him he asked to give him an interview with du Tillet as soon as du Tillet should be visible, and to that end a couple of gold pieces found their way into the possession of du Tillet's man. By way of these little sacrifices and great humiliations, common to courtiers and petitioners, he attained his end. At half-past eight, when his ex-assistant had slipped on a dressing-gown and shaken off the confused ideas of a man awakened from sleep, had yawned, stretched himself, and asked pardon of his old master, Birotteau found himself face to face with the tiger thirsting for revenge, the man whom he was fain to consider as his one friend in the world.

"Do not mind me," said Birotteau, replying to the apology.

"What do you want, *my good César?*" asked du Tillet; and César, not without terrible palpitations, gave the Baron de Nucingen's answer and demands to an inattentive listener, who looked about for the bellows, and scolded his manservant for taking so long over lighting the fire.

César did not notice at first that if the master was not heedful, the man was interested; but seeing this at last, he grew confused and broke off, to begin again, spurred on by a "Go on, go on; I am listening," from the abstracted banker.

The good man's shirt was soaked with perspiration, which turned icy cold when du Tillet looked full and steadily at him, and he could see those eyes of silver streaked with a few gold threads; there was a diabolical light in them which pierced him to the heart.

"My dear master, the Bank refused your paper, passed on to Gigonnet *without guarantee* by the firm of Claparon; is that my fault? What! you have been a judge at the Consular Tribunal, how could you make such blunders? I am, before all things, a banker. I will give you my money, but I could not expose my signature to a refusal from the Bank. I live by credit. So do we all. Do you want money?"

"Can you let me have all that I need in cash?"

"That depends upon the amount to be paid. How much do you want?"

"Thirty thousand francs."

"Plenty of chimney-pots tumbling about my ears!" exclaimed du Tillet, and he burst into a laugh.

The perfumer, misled by the splendor of du Tillet's surroundings, chose to regard that laugh as a sign that the sum was a mere trifle. He breathed again. Du Tillet rang the bell.

"Tell the cashier to come up."

"He is not here yet, sir," the servant answered.

"Those rogues are laughing at me! It is half-past eight; they ought to have done a million francs' worth of business by now."

Five minutes later, M. Legras came upstairs.

"How much have we in the safe?"

"Only twenty thousand francs. Your orders were to buy thirty thousand livres per annum in *rentes,* at present price, payable on the 15th."

"That is right; I am still asleep."

The cashier gave Birotteau a sly glance, and went.

"If truth were banished from the earth, she would leave her last word with a cashier," said du Tillet. "But have you not an interest in little Popinot's business, now that he has just set up for himself?" he added, after a horrible pause, in which the sweat gathered in drops on Birotteau's forehead.

"Yes," said César innocently. "Do you think you could discount his signature for a fair amount?"

"Bring me fifty thousand francs' worth of his acceptances, and I will get them negotiated for you at a reasonable rate by one Gobseck; very easy to do business with when he has plenty of capital on his hands, and he has a good deal just now."

Birotteau went home again heartbroken. He did not see that bankers and bill-discounters were sending him backwards and forwards in a game of battledore and shuttlecock: but Constance guessed even then that it would be impossible to obtain a loan of any sort. If three bankers had already re-

fused credit to a man as well known as the deputy-mayor, every one would hear of it, and the Bank of France was no longer to be thought of.

"Try to renew" (this was Constance's advice). "Go to your co-associate, M. Claparon, to every one, in fact, whose bills fall due on the 15th, and ask them to renew. There will be time enough then to go to bill-discounters with Popinot's bills."

"To-morrow will be the 13th!" exclaimed Birotteau, worn out with anxiety.

He was "endowed with a sanguine temperament," to quote his own prospectus; a temperament upon which the wear and tear of emotion and of thought tells so enormously, that sleep is imperatively needed to repair the waste. Césarine brought her father into the drawing-room, and played *Rousseau's Dream,* that charming composition of Hérold's, while Constance was sewing by her husband's side. The poor man lay back on the ottoman couch. Every time his eyes rested on his wife he saw a sweet smile on her lips, and so he fell asleep.

"Poor man," said Constance. "What torture is in store for him! . . . If only he can endure it!"

"Oh, mamma, what is it?" asked Césarine, seeing her mother in tears.

"I see bankruptcy ahead, darling. If your father is obliged to file his schedule, there must be no asking for pity of any one. You must be prepared to be an ordinary shop-girl, my dear. If I see you doing your part bravely, I shall have strength to begin life again. I know your father; he will not keep back one farthing; I shall give up my claims, all that we have will be sold. Take your clothes and trinkets to-morrow to Uncle Pillerault; you are not bound to lose anything, my child."

At these words, spoken with such devout sincerity, Césarine's terror knew no bounds. She thought of going to Anselme, but a feeling of delicacy withheld her.

The next morning found Birotteau in the Rue de Provence

at nine o'clock. He had fallen a victim to fresh anxieties of a totally different kind. To borrow money is not necessarily a complicated process in business; it is a matter of daily occurrence, for capital must always be found wherever a new enterprise is started; but to ask a man to renew a bill is in commercial circles what the Police Court is to the Court of Assize; it is a first step to bankruptcy, even as a misdemeanor is half-way to a crime. The secret of your weakness and your embarrassment passes out of your own keeping. A merchant delivers himself up, bound hand and foot, to another merchant, and charity is not a virtue much practised on the Stock Exchange.

The perfumer, who hitherto had walked the streets of Paris with bright confident eyes, now cast down by doubts, hesitated to go to Claparon; he was beginning to understand that with bankers the heart is merely a portion of the internal economy. Claparon had seemed to him so brutal in his coarse hilarity, and he had felt so much vulgarity in the man, that he shrank from approaching this creditor.

"He is nearer the people, perhaps he will have more soul!" This was the first word of accusation which the anguish of his position wrung from him.

César glanced up at the windows, and at the green curtains yellowed by the sun; then he drew the last of his stock of courage up from the depths of his soul, and climbed the stairs that led to a shabby mezzanine floor. He read the word *Office*, engraven in black letters on an oval brass-plate upon the door, and knocked. No one answered, so he went in.

The whole place was something more than humble; it savored of dire poverty, avarice, or neglect. No clerk showed his face behind a barrier of unpainted deal, surmounted at elbow height by a brass wire lattice, an arrangement which screened off an inner space occupied by tables and desks of blackened wood. Scattered about the deserted offices lay inkstands, in which mold was growing, quill-pens touzled like a street urchin's head, twisted up into suns with rays; the rooms were littered with cardboard cases, papers, and

circulars, useless no doubt. The floor of the lobby was as worn, as damp and gritty as the floor of a lodging-house parlor. Through a door on which the word *Counting-house* was inscribed, the visitor entered a second room, where everything was in keeping with the sinister waggery displayed in the first. In one corner stood a large cage of oak with a grill of copper-wire, and a cashier's sliding window. An enormous iron letter-box had doubtless been abandoned to the rats for a playground. The open door of this cage gave a view of yet another of these whimsical offices, and of a shabby and worm-eaten green chair, a mass of horsehair escaping through a hole underneath this piece of furniture in countless cork-screw curls that called its owner's wig to mind. Evidently this room had been the drawing-room of the house before it had been converted into offices, but the only attempt at ornamental furniture was a round table covered with a green cloth, and some old chairs covered with black leather and adorned with gilt nail-heads which stood about it. The chimney-piece had some pretensions to elegance, the hearth-stone was unblackened, and there were no visible signs that a fire had been lighted there. The pier-glass above it, tarnished with fly-spots, had a mean look, so had a mahogany clock-case bought at the sale of some departed notary's office furniture, a dreary object which enhanced the depressing effect of the pair of empty candle-sticks and the all-pervading sticky grime. The dinginess of the paper on the walls, drab with a rose-colored border, spoke plainly of the habitual presence of smokers and absence of ventilation. The whole stale-looking room resembled nothing so much as a newspaper editor's office. Birotteau, afraid of intruding on the banker's privacy, gave three sharp taps on the door opposite the one by which he had entered.

"Come in!" cried Claparon, and the sound of his voice evidently came from a room beyond. The perfumer could hear a good fire crackling on the hearth, but the banker was not there. This apartment did duty, as a matter of fact, for a private office. François Keller's elegantly furnished

sanctum differed from the grotesque neglect of this sham capitalist's surroundings as widely as Versailles differs from the wigwam of a Huron chief; and Birotteau, who had beheld the glories of the banking world, was about to be introduced to its blackguardism.

In a sort of oblong den, contrived behind the private office, where the whole of the furniture, scarcely elegant in its prime, had been battered, broken, covered with grease, slit to rags, soiled and spoiled by the slovenly habits of the occupier, reclined Claparon, who, at sight of Birotteau, flung on a filthy dressing-gown, laid down his pipe, and drew the bed-curtains with a haste that seemed suspicious even to the innocent perfumer.

"Take a seat, sir," said du Tillet's banker puppet.

Claparon without his wig, his head tied up in a bandana handkerchief all awry, was to Birotteau's thinking the more repulsive in that his loose dressing-gown gave glimpses of a nondescript knitted woolen garment, once white, but now a dingy brown, from indefinitely prolonged wear.

"Will you breakfast with me?" asked Claparon, bethinking himself of the ball, and prompted partly by a wish to turn the tables on his host, partly by anxiety to put Birotteau off the scent. And, in point of fact, a round table, hastily cleared of papers, was suspiciously suggestive; for it displayed a pâté, oysters, white wine, and a dish of vulgar kidneys, *sautés au vin de Champagne,* cooling in their gravy, while an omelette with truffles was browning before the sea-coal fire. The table was set for two persons; two table-napkins, soiled at supper on the previous evening, would have enlightened the purest innocence. Claparon, in the character of a man who has a belief in his own adroitness, insisted in spite of Birotteau's refusals.

"I should by rights have had somebody to breakfast, but that somebody has not kept the appointment," cried the cunning commercial traveler, speaking loud, so that the words might reach the ears of an auditor hiding under the blankets.

"I have come on business pure and simple, sir," said Birotteau, " and I shall not detain you long."

"I am overwhelmed with business," returned Claparon, pointing to a cylinder desk and to the tables, which were heaped up with papers, "not a poor little minute may I have to myself. I never see people except on Saturdays; but for you, my dear sir, I am always at home. I have no time left nowadays for love-affairs or lounging about; I am losing the business instinct, which takes intervals of carefully-timed idleness, if it is to keep its freshness. Nobody sees me busy doing nothing in the boulevards. Pshaw! business bores me, I don't care to hear any more about business at present; I have money enough, and I shall never have pleasure enough. My word, I have a mind to turn tourist and see Italy. Ah! beloved Italy! fair even amid her adversity, adorable land, where, doubtless, I shall find some magnificent, indolent Italian beauty; I have always admired Italian women! Have you ever had an Italian mistress? No? Oh, well, come to Italy with me. We will see Venice, the city of the Doges, fallen, more's the pity, into the hands of those philistines the Austrians, who know nothing of art. Pooh! let us leave business, and canals, and loans, and governments in peace. I am a prince when my pockets are well lined. Let us travel, by Jove!"

"Just one word, sir, and I will go," said Birotteau. "You passed my bills on to M. Bidault."

"Gigonnet, you mean; nice little fellow, Gigonnet; a man as easy-going as a—as a slip-knot."

"Yes," said César. "I should be glad—and in this matter I am relying on your integrity and honor—(Claparon bowed) —I should be glad if I could renew——"

"Impossible," said the banker roundly—"impossible. I am not the only man in the affair. We are all in council, 'tis a regular Chamber; but that we are all on good terms among ourselves, like rashers in a pan. Oh, we deliberate, that we do! The building land by the Madeleine is nothing; we are doing other things elsewhere. Eh! my good sir, if we were not busy in the Champs-Élysées, near the new Exchange which has just been finished, in the Quartier Saint-

Lazare and about the Tivoli, we should not be *vinanciers*, as old Nucingen says. So what is the Madeleine? A little speck of a business. Prrr! we do not dabble, my good sir," he said, tapping Birotteau's chest, and giving him a hug. "There, come and have your breakfast, and we will have a talk," Claparon continued, by way of softening his refusal.

"By all means," said Birotteau.—"So much the worse for the other," thought he. He would wait till the wine went to Claparon's head, and find out then who his partners really were in this affair, which began to have a very shady look.

"That is right!—Victoire!" shouted the banker, and at the call appeared a genuine Leonarda, tricked out like a fish-wife.

"Tell the clerks that I cannot see anybody, not even Nucingen, Keller, Gigonnet, and the rest of them!"

"There is no one here but M. Lempereur."

"He can receive the fashionables," said Claparon, "and the small fry need not go beyond the public office. They can be told that I am meditating how to get a pull—at a bottle of champagne."

To make an old commercial traveler tipsy is to achieve the impossible. César had mistaken his boon companion's symptoms, and thought his boisterous vulgarity was due to intoxication, when he tried to shrive him.

"There is that rascal Roguin still in it with you," said Birotteau; "ought you not to write and tell him to help out a friend whom he has left in the lurch, a friend with whom he dined every Sunday, and whom he has known for twenty years?"

"Roguin? A fool; we have his share. Don't be downhearted, my good friend, it will be all right. Pay on the 15th, and that done, we shall see! I say, 'we shall see'—(a glass of wine!)—but the capital is no concern of mine whatever. Oh! if you should not pay at all, *I* should not give you black looks; my share in the affair is limited to a percentage on the purchase-money, and something down on the completion of the contract, in consideration of which ▾ brought round the

vendors. . . . Do you understand? Your associates are good men, so I am not afraid, my dear sir. Business is so divided up nowadays. Every business requires the co-operation of so many specialists! Do you join the rest of us? Then do not dabble in combs and pomade pots—a paltry way of doing business; fleece the public, and go in for the speculation."

"A speculation?" asked the perfumer; "what sort of business is it?"

"It is commerce in the abstract," replied Claparon, "an affair which will only come to light in ten years' time at the bidding of the great Nucingen, the Napoleon of finance, a scheme by which a man embraces sum-totals, and skims the cream of profits yet to be made; a gigantic conception, a method of marking expectations like timber for annual felling; it is a new cabal, in short. There are but ten or twelve of us as yet, long-headed men, all initiated into the cabalistic secrets of these magnificent combinations."

César opened his eyes and ears, trying to comprehend these mixed metaphors.

"Listen to me," Claparon continued, after a pause; "such strokes as these need capable men. Now, there is the man who has ideas, but has not a penny, like all men with ideas. That sort of man spends and is spent, and cares for nothing. Imagine a pig roaming about a wood for truffles, and a knowing fellow on his tracks; that is the man with the money, who waits till he hears a grunt over a find. When the man with the ideas has hit upon a good notion, the man with the money taps him on the shoulder with a 'What is this? You are putting yourself in the furnace-mouth, my good friend; your back is not strong enough to carry this; here are a thousand francs for you, and let *me* put this affair in working order.' Good! Then the banker summons the manufacturers—'Set to work, my friends! Out with your prospectuses! Blarney to the death!' Out come the hunting-horns, and they pipe up with 'A hundred thousand francs for five sous!'—or five sous for a hundred thousand francs,

gold-mines, coal-mines; all the flourishes and alarums of commerce, in short. Art and science are paid to give their opinion, the affair is paraded about, the public rushes into it, and receives paper for its money, and our takings are in our hands. The pig is safe in his sty with his potatoes, and the rest of them are wallowing in bills of exchange. That is how it is done, my dear sir. Go in for speculation. What do you want to be? A pig or a gull, a clown or a millionaire? Think it over. I have summed up the modern theory of loans for you. Come to see me; you will find a good fellow, always jolly. French joviality, at once grave and gay, does no harm in business, quite the contrary! Men who can drink are made to understand each other. Come! another glass of champagne? It is choice wine, eh? It was sent me by a man at Épernay, for whom I have sold a good deal of it, and at good prices too (I used to be in the wine trade). He shows his gratitude, and remembers me in my prosperity. A rare trait."

Birotteau, bewildered by this flippancy and careless tone in a man whom everybody credited with such astonishing profundity and breadth, did not dare to question him any further. But in spite of the confusion and excitement induced by unwonted potations of champagne, a name let fall by du Tillet came up in his mind, and he asked for the address of a bill-discounter named Gobseck.

"Is that what you are after, my dear sir?" asked Claparon. "Gobseck is a bill-discounter in the same sense that the hangman is a doctor. The first thing that he says to you is 'Fifty per cent.' He belongs to the school of Harpagon; he will supply you with canary birds, and stuffed boa-constrictors, with furs in summer and nankin in winter. And whose bills are you going to offer him? He will want you to deposit your wife, your daughter, your umbrella, and everything that is yours, down to your hat-box, your clogs (do you wear hinged clogs?), poker and tongs, and the firewood in your cellar, before he will take your bills with your bare name

to them! . . . Gobseck! Gobseck! In the name of misfortune, who sent you to the guillotine of commerce?"

"M. du Tillet."

"Oh! the rogue; just like him. We used to be friends once upon a time; and if the quarrel has gone so far that we do not speak to each other now, I have good reason for disliking him, believe me! He let me see the bottom of his soul of mud, and he made me uncomfortable at that fine ball you gave. I cannot bear him, with the coxcomb airs he gives himself, because he has the good graces of a *notaresse!* I could have marquises myself if I had a mind; he will never have my esteem, I know. Ah! my esteem is a princess who will never take up too much room on his pillow. I say though, old man, you are a funny one to give us a ball, and then come and ask us to renew two months afterwards! You are likely to go far. Let us go into speculation together. You have a character; it would be useful to me. Oh! du Tillet was born to understand Gobseck. Du Tillet will come to a bad end in the Place de Grève. If, as they say, he is one of Gobseck's lambs, he will soon come to the length of his tether. Gobseck squats in a corner of his web like an old spider who has seen the world. Sooner or later, *zut!* and the money-lender sucks in his man like a glass of wine. So much the better! Du Tillet played me a trick—oh! a scurvy trick!"

After an hour and a half spent in listening to meaningless prate, Birotteau determined to go, for the commercial traveler was preparing to relate the adventure of a representative of the people at Marseilles, who had fallen in love with an actress who played the part of *La Belle Arsène.* The Royalist pit hissed the lady.

"Up he gets," said Claparon, "and stands bolt upright in his box. *'Arté qui l'a siblée?'* says he; *'eu! . . . Si c'est oune femme, je l'amprise; si c'est oune homme, nous se verrons; si c'est ni l'un ni l'autte, que le troun di Diou le cure!'* . . . How do you think the adventure ended?"

"Good-day, sir," said Birotteau.

"You will have to come and see me," said Claparon at this

"Cayron's first bill has come back protested, and I am the indorser; I have reimbursed the money, and I shall send it on to you, for business is business."

Birotteau felt this cool affectation of a readiness to oblige, as he had already felt Keller's hardness and Nucingen's Teutonic banter, in his very heart. The man's familiarity, his grotesque confidences made in the generous glow of champagne, had been like a blight to the perfumer; he felt as if he were leaving some evil haunt in the world financial.

He walked downstairs; he found himself in the streets and went, not knowing whither he went. He followed the boulevard till he reached the Rue Saint-Denis, then he bethought himself of Molineux, and turned to go towards the Cour Batave. He mounted the same dirty tortuous staircase which he had ascended but lately in the pride of his glory. He remembered Molineux's peevish meanness, and winced at the thought of asking a favor of him. As on the occasion of his previous visit, he found the owner of house property by the fireside, but this time he had eaten his breakfast. Birotteau formulated his demand.

"Renew a bill for twelve hundred francs?" said Molineux, with an incredulous smile. "You do not mean it, sir. If you have not twelve hundred francs on the 15th to meet my bill, will you please to send me back my receipt for rent that has not been paid? Ah! I should be angry; I do not use the slightest ceremony in money matters; my rents are my income. If I acted otherwise, how should I pay my way? A man in business will not disapprove of that wholesome rule. Money knows nobody; money has no ears; money has no heart. It is a cold winter, and here is firewood dearer again. If you do not pay on the 15th, you will receive a little summons by noon on the 16th. Pshaw! old Mitral, who serves your processes, acts for me too; he will send you your summons in an envelope, with due regard for your high position."

"A writ has never been served on me, sir," said Birotteau.

"Everything must have a beginning," retorted Molineux.

The perfumer was taken aback by the little old man's frank ferocity; the knell of credit rang in his ears; and every fresh stroke awoke memories of his own sayings as to bankruptcies, prompted by his remorseless jurisprudence. Those opinions of his seemed to be traced in letters of fire on the soft substance of his brain.

"By the by," Molineux was saying, "you forget to write 'For value received in rent' across your bills; that might give me a preferential claim."

"My position forbids me to do anything to the prejudice of my creditors," said Birotteau, dazed by that glimpse into the gulf before him.

"Good, sir, very good. I thought that I had nothing left to learn in my dealings with messieurs my tenants. You have taught me never to take bills in payment. Oh! I will take the thing into Court, for your answer as good as tells me that you will not meet your engagements. The case touches every landlord in Paris."

Birotteau went out, sick of life. Feeble and tender natures lose heart at the first rebuff, just as a first success puts courage into them. César's only hope now lay in little Popinot's devotion; his thoughts naturally turned to him as he passed the Marché des Innocents.

"Poor boy! who would have told me this when I started him six weeks ago at the Tuileries."

It was nearly four o'clock, the time when the magistrates leave the Palais. As it fell out, the elder Popinot had gone to see his nephew. The examining magistrate, who in moral questions had a kind of second-sight which laid bare the secret motives of others, who discerned the underlying significance of the most commonplace actions of daily life, the germs of crime, the roots of a misdemeanor, was watching Birotteau, though Birotteau did not suspect it. Birotteau seemed to be put out by finding the uncle with the nephew; the perfumer's manner was constrained, he was preoccupied and thoughtful. Little Popinot, busy as usual with

his pen behind his ear, always fell flat, figuratively speaking, before Césarine's father. César's meaningless remarks to his partner, to the judge's thinking, were merely screens, some important demand was about to be made. Instead of leaving the shop, therefore, the shrewd man of law stayed with his nephew, for he thought that César would try to get rid of him by making a move himself. And so it was. When Birotteau had gone, the judge followed, but he noticed César lounging along the Rue des Cinq-Diamants in the direction of the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher. This infinitely small matter bred suspicion in the mind of Popinot the elder; he mistrusted César's intentions, went along the Rue des Lombards, watched the perfumer go back to Anselme's shop, and promptly repaired thither.

"My dear Popinot," César had begun, "I have come to ask you to do me a service."

"What is there to be done?" asked Popinot, with generous eagerness.

"Ah! you give me life!" cried the good man, rejoicing in this warmth from the heart that sent a glow through him after those twenty-five days of glacial cold. "It is this, to allow me to draw a bill on you on account of my share of the profits; we will settle between ourselves."

Popinot looked steadily at César; César lowered his eyes. Just at that moment the magistrate reappeared.

"My boy—Oh! I beg your pardon, M. Birotteau—my boy, I forgot to say . . ." and with the imperative gesture learned in the exercise of his profession, the elder Popinot drew his nephew out into the street, and marched him, bareheaded and in shirt-sleeves as he was, in the direction of the Rue des Lombards.

"Your old master will very likely find himself in such straits, that he may be forced to file his schedule, nephew. Before a man comes to that, a man who, may be, has a record of forty years of upright dealing, nay the very best of men, in his anxiety to save his honor, will behave like the most frantic gambler. Men in that predicament will do anything.

They will sell their wives and traffic in their daughters; they will bring their best friends into the scrape, and pawn property which is not theirs; they will go to the gaming-table, turn actors—nay, liars; they will shed tears at need. In short, I have known them do the most extraordinary things. You yourself know how good-natured Roguin was, a man who looked as though butter would not melt in his mouth. I do not press these conclusions home in M. Birotteau's case; I believe that he is honest; but if he should ask you to do anything at all irregular, no matter what it is; if he should want you, for instance, to accept accommodation bills, and so start you in a system which, to my way of thinking, is the beginning of all sorts of rascality (for it is counterfeit paper-money), promise me that you will sign nothing without first consulting me. You must remember that if you love his daughter, even for your own sake and hers, you must not spoil your future. If M. Birotteau must come to grief, what is the use of going with him? What is it but cutting yourselves off from all chance of escape through your business, which will be his refuge?"

"Thank you, uncle; a word to the wise is sufficient," said Anselme; his uncle's words explained that heartrending cry from his master.

The merchant who dealt in druggists' oils and sundries looked thoughtful as he entered his dark shop. Birotteau saw the change.

"Will you honor me by coming up to my room? we can talk more at our ease there than here. The assistants, busy as they are, might overhear us."

Birotteau followed Popinot, a victim to such cruel suspense as the condemned man knows, while he waits for a reprieve or the rejection of his appeal.

"My dear benefactor," Anselme began, "you do not doubt my devotion; it is blind. Permit me to ask but one thing, will this sum of money save you once and for all? Or will it merely put off some catastrophe? in which case, what is the use of carrying me with you? You want bills at ninety

days. Very well, but I am sure that I myself shall not be able to meet them in three months' time."

Birotteau, white and grave, rose to his feet, and looked into Popinot's face.

Popinot, in alarm, cried, "I will do it if you wish it."

"Ungrateful boy!" cried the perfumer, gathering all his strength to hurl at Anselme the words which should brand him as infamous.

Birotteau walked to the door and went. Popinot, recovering from the sensation which the terrible words had produced in him, darted downstairs and rushed into the street, but saw no sign of the perfumer. The dreadful words of doom rang in the ears of Césarine's lover, poor César's face of anguish was always before his eyes; he lived, indeed, like Hamlet, haunted by a ghastly spectre.

Birotteau staggered along the streets like a drunken man. He found himself at last on the Quai, and followed its course to Sèvres, where he spent the night in an inn, stupefied with sorrow; and his frightened wife dared not make any inquiries for him. Under such circumstances, it is fatal to give the alarm rashly. Constance wisely immolated her anxiety to her husband's business reputation; she sat up all night for him, mingling prayers with her fears. Was César dead? Had he left Paris in the pursuit of some last hope? When morning came, she behaved as though she knew the cause of his absence; but when at five o'clock César had not returned, she sent word to her uncle and begged him to go to the Morgue. All through that day the brave woman sat at her desk, her daughter doing her embroidery by her side, and, neither sad nor smiling, both confronted the public with quiet faces.

When Pillerault came, he brought César with him; he had met his niece's husband after 'Change in the Palais Royal, hesitating to enter a gaming-house. That day was the 14th.

César could eat nothing at dinner. His stomach, too violently contracted, rejected food; it was a miserable meal; but it was not so bad as the evening that came after it. For the hundredth time, the merchant experienced one of the

hideous alternations of despair and hope which wear out weak natures, when the soul passes through the whole scale of sensations, from the highest pitch of joy to the lowest depths of despair. Derville, the consulting barrister, rushed into the splendid drawing-room. Mme. César had done everything in her power to keep her poor husband there; he had wanted to sleep in the attic, "so as not to see the monuments of my folly," he said.

"We have gained the day," cried Derville.

At these words the lines in César's face were smoothed out, but his joy alarmed Pillerault and Derville. The two frightened women went away to cry in Césarine's room.

"Now I can borrow on the property!" exclaimed the perfumer.

"It would not be wise to do so," said Derville; "they have given notice of appeal, the Court-Royal may reverse the decision, but we shall know in a month's time."

"A month!"

César sank into a lethargy, from which no one attempted to rouse him. This species of intermittent catalepsy, during which the body lives and suffers while the action of the mind is suspended, this fortuitous respite from mental anguish, was regarded as a godsend by Constance, Césarine, Pillerault, and Derville—and they were right. In this way Birotteau was able to recover from the wear and tear of the night's emotions. He lay in a low chair by the fireside; over against him sat his wife, who watched him closely, with a sweet smile on her lips—one of those smiles which prove that women are nearer to the angels than men, in that they can blend infinite tenderness with the most sincere compassion, a secret known only to the angels whose presence is revealed to us in the dreams providentially scattered at long intervals in the course of human life. Césarine, sitting on a footstool at her mother's feet, now and again bent her head over her father's hands and brushed them lightly with her hair, as if by this caress she would fain communicate through the sense of touch the thoughts which at such a time are importunate when rendered by articulate speech.

Pillerault, that philosopher prepared for every emergency, sat in his armchair, like the statue of the Chancellor of the Hôpital in the peristyle of the Chamber of Deputies, wearing the same look of intelligence which is stamped on the features of an Egyptian sphinx, and talked in a low voice with Derville. Constance had recommended that the lawyer, whose discretion was above suspicion, should be consulted. With the schedule already drafted in her mind, she laid the situation before Derville; and after an hour's consultation or thereabouts, held in the presence of the dozing performer, Derville looked at Pillerault and shook his head.

"Madame," said he, with the pitiless coolness of a man of business, "you must file your petition. Suppose that by some means or other you should contrive to meet your bills to-morrow, you must eventually pay at least three thousand francs before you can borrow on the whole of your landed property. To your liabilities, amounting to five hundred and fifty thousand francs, you oppose assets consisting of a very valuable and very promising piece of property which cannot be realized—you must give up in a given time, and it is better, in my opinion, to jump from the window than to roll down the stairs."

"I am of that opinion, too, my child," said Pillerault.

Mme. César and Pillerault both went to the door with Derville.

"Poor father!" said Césarine, rising softly to put a kiss on César's forehead.—"Then could Anselme do nothing?" she asked, when her mother and uncle came in again.

"The ungrateful boy!" cried César. The name had touched the one sensitive spot in his memory, like the string of a piano resonant to the stroke of the hammer.

Little Popinot, meanwhile, since those words had been hurled at him like an anathema, had not had a moment's peace or a wink of sleep. The hapless youth called down maledictions on his uncle, and went in search of him. To induce experience and legal acumen to capitulate, young Popinot poured forth all a lover's eloquence, hoping to work

on the feelings of a judge, but his words slid over the man of law like water over oilcloth.

"Commercial usage," pleaded Anselme, "permits a sleeping partner to draw to a certain extent upon his co-associate on account of profits; and in our partnership we ought to put it in practice. After looking into my business all round, I feel sure that I am good to pay forty thousand francs in three months' time. M. César's honesty permits me to feel confident that he will use the forty thousand francs to meet his bills. So, if he fails, the creditors will have no reason to complain of this action on our part. And besides, uncle, I would rather lose forty thousand francs than give up Césarine. At this moment, while I am speaking, she will have heard of my refusal, and I shall be lowered in her eyes. I said that I would give my life for my benefactor! I am in the case of the young sailor who must go to the bottom with his captain, or the soldier who is bound to perish with his general."

"A good heart and a bad man of business; you will not be lowered in *my* eyes," said the judge, grasping his nephew's hand. "I have thought a good deal about this," he continued; "I know that you love Césarine to distraction; I think that you can obey the laws of your heart without breaking the laws of commerce."

"Oh! uncle, if you have found out a way, you will save my honor."

"Lend Birotteau fifty thousand francs on his proprietary interest in your Oil; it has become, as it were, a piece of property; I will draw up the document for you."

Anselme embraced his uncle, went home, made out bills for fifty thousand francs, and ran all the way from the Rue des Cinq-Diamants to the Place Vendôme; so that at the very moment when Césarine, her mother, and Pillerault were gazing at the perfumer, amazed by the sepulchral tone in which the words "Ungrateful boy!" were uttered in answer to the girl's question, the drawing-room door opened, and Popinot appeared.

"My dearly beloved master," he said, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, "here is the thing for which you asked me."

He held out the bills.

"Yes. I have thought carefully over my position; I shall meet them, never fear! Save your honor!"

"I was quite sure of him," cried Césarine, grasping Popinot's hand convulsively.

Mme. César embraced Popinot. The perfumer rose out of his chair, like the righteous at the sound of the last trump; he too was issuing from a tomb. Then with frenzied eagerness he clutched the fifty stamped papers.

"One moment!" cried the stern Uncle Pillerault, snatching up Popinot's bills. "One moment!"

The four persons composing this family group—César and his wife, Césarine and Popinot—bewildered by their uncle's interposition, and by the tone in which he spoke, looked on in terror while he tore the bills to pieces and flung them into the fire, where they blazed up before any one of them could stop him.

"Uncle!"

"Uncle!"

"Uncle!"

"Sir!"

There were four voices, and four hearts in one, a formidable unanimity. Uncle Pillerault put an arm round little Popinot, held him tightly to his heart, and put a kiss on his forehead.

"You deserve to be adored by any one who has a heart at all," said he. "If you loved my daughter, and she had a million, and you had nothing but *that*" (he pointed to the blackened scraps of paper), "you should marry her in a fortnight if she loved you. Your master," indicating César, "is mad.—Now, nephew," Pillerault began gravely, addressing the perfumer, "no more illusions! Business must be carried on with hard coin, and not with sentiments. This is sublime, but it is useless. I have been on 'Change for a cou-

ple of hours. No one will give you credit for two farthings; everybody is talking about your disaster; everybody knows that you could not get renewals, that you went to more than one banker, and that they would have nothing to say to you, and all your other follies; it is known that you climbed six pair of stairs to ask the landlord who chatters like a jackdaw to renew a bill for twelve hundred francs; everybody says that you gave a ball to hide your embarrassment. . . . They will say directly that you had no money deposited with Roguin. Roguin is a blind, according to your enemies. One of my friends, commissioned to report everything, has brought confirmation of my suspicions. Every one expects that you will try to put Popinot's bills on the market; in fact, you set him up on purpose to tide you over your difficulties. In short, all the gossip and slander usually set in motion by any man who tries to mount a step in the social scale is going the round of business circles at this moment. You would spend a week in hawking Popinot's bills from place to place, you would meet with humiliating refusals, and nobody would have anything to do with them. There is nothing to show how many of them you are issuing, and people look to see you sacrificing this poor boy to save yourself. You would ruin Popinot's credit in pure waste. Do you know how much the most sanguine bill-discounter would give you for your fifty thousand francs? Twenty thousand; *twenty thousand*, do you understand? There are times in business when you must contrive to hold out for three days without food, as if you had the indigestion, and the fourth brings admission to the pantry of credit. You cannot hold out for the three days, and therein lies the whole position. Take heart, my poor nephew, you must file your schedule. Here is Popinot, and here am I; as soon as your assistants have gone to bed we will set to work to spare you the misery of it."

"Uncle! . . ." cried the perfumer, clasping his hands.

"César, do you really mean to arrive at a fraudulent bankruptcy with assets *nil*? Your interest in Popinot's business saves your honor."

This last fatal light thrown on his position made it clear to César; he saw the full extent of the hideous truth; he sank down into his low chair, and then on to his knees; his mind wandered, he became a child again. His wife thought the shock had killed him, and knelt to raise him, but she clung close to him when she saw him clasp his hands and raise his eyes; and in spite of the presence of his uncle, his daughter, and Popinot, he began with remorseful resignation to repeat the sublime prayer of the Church on earth:

"Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven. *Give us this day our daily bread.* And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen."

Tears filled Pillerault's stoical eyes, and Césarine stood, white and rigid as marble, with her tear-stained face hidden on Anselme's shoulder. Then the old merchant took the young man's arm, "Let us go downstairs," he said.

At half-past eleven they left César in the care of his wife and daughter. Just at that moment Célestin, who had looked after the business during this storm, came upstairs and opened the drawing-room door. Césarine heard his footsteps, and hurried forward to place herself so as to screen the prostrate master of the house.

"Among this evening's letters," he said, "there was one from Tours, the direction was not clear, it has been delayed. I thought it might be from the master's brother, so I did not open it."

"Father," cried Césarine, "there is a letter from uncle at Tours."

"Ah! I am saved!" exclaimed César. "My brother! my brother!" and he kissed the letter, which ran thus:

François Birotteau to César Birotteau.

TOURS, 17*th*.

"MY BELOVED BROTHER,—Your letter has given me the keenest distress; and so when I had read it, I offered up to God on your behalf the holy sacrifice of the mass, praying Him, by the blood shed for us by our Divine Redeemer, to look mercifully upon you in your affliction. And now that I have put up my prayer *pro meo fratre Cæsare,* my eyes are filled with tears to think that by misfortune I am separated from you at a time when you must need the support of a brother's affection. But then I bethought me that the worthy and venerated M. Pillerault will doubtless fill my place. My dear César, in the midst of your troubles, do not forget that this life of ours is a life of trial and a transition state; that one day we shall be rewarded if we have suffered for the holy name of God, for His holy Church, for putting in practice the doctrines of the Gospel, or for leading a virtuous life; if it were not so, the things of this present world would be unintelligible. I repeat these words, though I know how good and pious you are, because it may happen to those who, like you, are tossed by the tempests of this world, and launched upon the perilous seas of human concerns, to be led to blaspheme in their distresses, distracted as they are by pain. Do not curse the men who will wound you, nor God, who mingles bitterness with your life at His will. Look not on the earth, but rather keep your eyes lifted to Heaven; thence comes comfort for the weak, the riches of the poor are there, and the fears of the rich . . ."

"Oh, Birotteau," interrupted his wife, "just miss that out, and see if he is sending us anything."

"We will often read it over," said her husband, drying his eyes. He opened the letter, and a draft on the Treasury fell out. "I was quite sure of him, poor brother," said Birotteau, picking up the draft.

". . . I went to see Mme. de Listomère," he continued, reading in a voice choked with tears, "and without giving a

reason for my request, I begged her to lend me all that she could spare, so as to swell the amount of my savings. Her generosity enables me to make up the sum of a thousand francs, which I send you in the form of a draft by the Receiver-General of Tours upon the Treasury."

"A handsome advance!" said Constance, looking at Césarine.

"By retrenching some superfluities in my way of living, I shall be able to repay Mme. de Listomère the money I have borrowed of her in three years' time; so do not trouble about it, my dear César. I am sending you all that I have in the world, with the wish that the sum may assist you to bring your difficulties to a happy termination; doubtless they are but momentary. I know your delicacy, and wish to anticipate your scruples. Do not dream of paying any interest on the amount, nor of returning it in the day of prosperity, which will dawn for you before long, if God deigns to grant the petitions which I make daily for you. After your last letter, received two years ago, I thought that you were rich, and that I might give my savings to the poor; but now all that I have belongs to you. When you have weathered this passing squall, keep the money for my niece Césarine, so that when she is established in life she may spend it on some trifle which will remind her of an old uncle, whose hands are always raised to Heaven to implore God's blessing upon her, and for all those who shall be dear to her. Bear in mind, in fact, dear César, that I am a poor priest, living by the grace of God, as the wild-birds live in the fields, walking quietly in my own path, striving to keep the commandments of our divine Saviour, and consequently needing but little. So do not have the least hesitation in your difficult position, and think of me as one who loves you tenderly. Our excellent Abbé Chapeloud (to whom I have not said a word about your strait) knows that I am writing to you, and wishes me to send the most kindly messages to all your family, with

wishes for your continued prosperity. May God vouchsafe to preserve you and your wife and daughter in good health; and I pray for patience to you all, and courage in the day of adversity. "FRANÇOIS BIROTTEAU.

"Priest of the Cathedral Church of Tours, and Vicar of the Parish Church of Saint-Gatien."

"A thousand francs!" cried Mme. Birotteau, in vehement anger.

"Lock it up," César said gravely; "it is all he has. Besides, it belongs to our Césarine, and should enable us to live without asking anything of our creditors."

"And then they will believe that you have taken away large sums."

"I shall show them his letter."

"They will say that it is a fraud."

"Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried César, appalled at this; "I have often thought that very thing of poor folk who, no doubt, were just in my position."

Mother and daughter were both too anxious about César to leave him, and they sewed on by his side. There was a deep silence. At two o'clock in the morning the drawing-room door was softly opened, and Popinot beckoned to Mme. César to come downstairs. At the sight of his niece, Uncle Pillerault took off his spectacles.

"There is hope yet, my child," he said; "all is not over; but your husband could not stand the strain of the ups and downs of this business, so Popinot and I will try to arrange it. Do not leave the shop to-morrow, and take down the names of all the holders of the bills; we have all the day till four o'clock. This is my idea. There is nothing to fear from M. Ragon or from me. Suppose now that Roguin had paid over to the vendors the hundred thousand francs you deposited with him —in that case, you would no more have them than you have them to-day. You have to meet bills to the amount of a hundred and forty thousand francs, payable to Claparon's order;

you must pay them anyhow, so it is not Roguin's bankruptcy which is ruining you. Now, to meet your liabilities, I see forty thousand francs to be borrowed sooner or later on your factory, and sixty thousand francs in Popinot's bills. So you may struggle through; for once through, you can raise money on that building-land by the Madeleine. If your principal creditor agrees to help you, I shall not consider my fortune; I will sell my *rentes;* I shall be without bread; Popinot will be between life and death; and, as for you, you will be at the mercy of the smallest events. But the Oil will give a good return, no doubt. Popinot and I have been consulting together; we will support you in this struggle. Oh, I will eat my dry bread gaily, if success dawns on the horizon. But everything depends on Gigonnet and on Claparon and his associates. We are going to see Gigonnet between seven and eight, Popinot and I, and then we shall know what to make of their intentions."

Constance, carried away by her feelings, put her arms about her uncle, and could not speak for tears and sobs. Neither Popinot nor Pillerault could know that Bidault, *alias* Gigonnet, and Claparon were but two of du Tillet's doubles, and that du Tillet had set his heart upon reading this terrible paragraph in the *Gazette:*

"Decree of the Tribunal of Commerce. M. César Birotteau, wholesale perfumer, of 397 Rue Saint-Honoré, Paris, declared a bankrupt, date provisionally fixed, 16th of January 1819. Registrar: M. Gobenheim-Keller. Agent: M. Molineux."

Anselme and Pillerault studied César's affairs till daylight came, and at eight o'clock that morning the two heroic comrades, the old veteran and the subaltern of yesterday, neither of whom was destined to experience on his own account the dreadful agony of mind endured by those who go up and down the stairs of Bidault, otherwise Gigonnet, betook themselves without a word to the Rue Grenétat. It was a

painful time for both of them. More than once Pillerault passed his hand over his forehead.

In the Rue Grenétat multifarious small trades are carried on in every overcrowded house. Every building has a repulsive aspect. The hideousness of these houses has a distinct quality of its own, in which the mean squalor of a poor industrial neighborhood predominates.

Old Gigonnet inhabited the third floor in one of these houses. All the windows, with their dirty square panes of glass, were secured to the frames by pivots, and tilted to admit the air; you walked straight up the staircase from the street, and the porter lived in the box on the mezzanine floor lighted from the staircase. Every one in the house, except Gigonnet, plied some handicraft; workmen came and went all day long. Every step on the stairs, where filth was allowed to accumulate, was plastered over with a coating of mud, hard or soft, according to the state of the weather. Each landing on this fetid stair displayed the name of some craftsman painted in gilt letters on a sheet of iron, which was painted red and varnished, and some sample of the man's achievements in his trade. The doors, for the most part, stood ajar, affording glimpses of grotesque combinations of industry and domestic life; the sounds which issued thence, snatches of song, yells, whistlings, and uncouth growls recalled the noises heard at the Jardin des Plantes towards four o'clock. The smartest braces for the trade in the *article Paris* were being made in a loathsome den on the first floor; on the second, among heaps of the most unsavory litter, the manufacture of the daintiest cardboard boxes, displayed at the New Year in shop windows, was carried on. Gigonnet, who was worth eighteen hundred thousand francs, lived and died on the third floor in this house. Nothing would induce him to leave it, although his niece, Mme. Saillard, offered him rooms in a mansion in the Place Royale.

"Courage!" said Pillerault, as he jerked the cord of the lever bell-pull that hung by Gigonnet's neat gray-painted door.

Gigonnet himself opened it, and the perfumer's two champions in the lists of bankruptcy went through a formal, chilly-looking room, with curtainless windows, and entered a second, where all three seated themselves.

The bill-discounter took up his position before a grate full of ashes, in which the wood maintained a stubborn resistance to the flames. The sight of his green cardboard cases, and the monastic austerity of the office, windy as a cave, sent a cold chill through Popinot. His dazed eyes wandered over the pattern of the cheap wall-paper—tricolor flowers on a bluish background—which had been hung some five-and-twenty years back; and turned from that depressing sight to the ornaments on the chimney-piece, a lyre-shaped clock and oval vases, blue Sèvres ware, handsomely mounted in gilt copper. This bit of flotsam, recovered by Gigonnet from the wreck of Versailles, when the palace was sacked by the populace, came from a queen's boudoir, but the magnificent-looking ornaments were flanked by a couple of wrought-iron candlesticks of the commonest description, a harsh contrast which continually reminded the beholder of the manner in which their owner had come by those royal splendors.

"I know that you cannot come on your own account," said Gigonnet, "but for the great Birotteau. Well, what is it, my friends?"

"I know that you have nothing to learn, so we will be brief," said Pillerault. "Have you his bills payable to Claparon?"

"Yes."

"Will you exchange the first fifty thousand francs that will fall due for bills accepted by M. Popinot here, less the discount, of course?"

Gigonnet lifted the terrible green cap, which seemed to have been born with him, and displayed a bald butter-colored pate, then with a Voltairean grin:

"You want to pay me in oil for hair," he remarked, "and what should I do with it?"

"When you joke it is time for us to take ourselves off," said Pillerault.

"You speak like the sensible man that you are," said Gigonnet, with a flattering smile.

"Very well, and how if I back M. Popinot's bills?" asked Pillerault, making a final effort.

"You are as good as gold ingots, M. Pillerault; but I have no use for gold ingots, all that I want is current coin."

Pillerault and Popinot took their leave and went. Even at the foot of the staircase Popinot's knees still shook under him.

"Is he a man?" he asked of Pillerault.

"People say so," answered the older man. "Keep this little interview always in mind, Anselme! You have seen what money-lending is, stripped of its masquerade and palaver. Some unforeseen event turns the screw upon us, and we are the grapes, and bill-discounters the barrels. This speculation in building-land is a good piece of business no doubt; Gigonnet, or somebody behind him, has a mind to cut César's throat and to step into his shoes. That is all; there is no help for it now. And this is what comes of borrowing money; never resort to it."

It had been a dreadful morning for Mme. Birotteau. For the first time she had taken the addresses of those who came for money, and had sent away the Bank collector without paying him; yet the brave woman was glad to spare her husband these humiliations. Towards eleven o'clock she saw Pillerault and Anselme returning; she had been expecting them with ever-increasing anxiety, and now she read her doom in their faces. There was no help for it, the schedule must be filed.

"He will die of grief," said the poor wife.

"I could wish that he might," said Pillerault gravely; "but he is so devout, that as things stand his director the Abbé Loraux alone can save him."

Pillerault, Popinot, and Constance remained below, while one of the assistants went for the Abbé Loraux. The Abbé should prepare Birotteau for the schedule which Célestin was copying out fair for his master's signature. The assistants

were in despair; they loved their employer. At four o'clock the good priest came. Constance told him all the details of the calamity which had befallen them, and the Abbé went upstairs like a soldier mounting to the breach.

"I know why you have come," César exclaimed.

"My son," said the priest, "your sentiments of submission to the Divine will have long been known to me, now you are called upon to put them in practice. Keep your eyes fixed ever upon the Cross, contemplate the Cross without ceasing, and think of the cup of humiliation of which the Saviour of men was compelled to drink, think of the anguish of His Passion, and thus you may endure the mortifications sent to you by God——"

"My brother the Abbé has already prepared me," said César, holding out the letter, which he read over again, to his confessor.

"You have a good brother," said M. Loraux, "a virtuous and sweet-natured wife, and a loving daughter, two real friends in your uncle and dear Anselme, two indulgent creditors in the Ragons. All these kind hearts will pour balm into your wounds continually, and will help you to carry your cross. Promise me to bear yourself with a martyr's courage, and to take the blow without wincing."

The Abbé coughed, a signal to Pillerault in the next room.

"My submission is unlimited," said César calmly. "Disgrace has come upon me; I ought only to think of making reparation."

Césarine and the priest were both surprised by poor Birotteau's tone and look. And yet nothing was more natural. Every man bears a definitely known misfortune better than suspense and constant alternations of excessive joy at one moment, followed on the next by the last extremity of anguish.

"I have been dreaming for twenty-two years," he said, "and to-day I wake to find myself staff in hand again." César had once more become the Tourangeau peasant.

At these words Pillerault held his nephew tightly in his arms. César looked up and saw his wife and Célestin, the

latter with significant documents in his hands; then he glanced calmly round the group; all the eyes that met his were sad but friendly.

"One moment!" he said, and unfastening his Cross of the Legion of Honor, which he gave to the Abbé Loraux, "you will give that back to me when I can wear it without a blush. —Célestin," he continued, turning to his assistant, "send in my resignation; I am no longer deputy-mayor. M. l'Abbé will dictate the letter to you, date it January 14th, and send Raguet with it to M. de la Billardière."

Célestin and the Abbé Loraux went downstairs. For nearly a quarter of an hour perfect silence prevailed in César's study. Such firmness took the family by surprise. Célestin and the Abbé came back again, and César signed the letter of resignation; but when Pillerault laid the schedule before him, poor Birotteau could not repress a dreadful nervous tremor.

"Oh, God! have mercy upon us!" he said, as he signed the terrible instrument and handed it to Célestin.

Then Anselme Popinot spoke, and a gleam of light crossed his clouded brow. "Monsieur and madame," he said, "will you grant me the honor of mademoiselle's hand?"

This speech brought tears into the eyes of all who heard it; César alone rose to his feet, took Anselme's hand, and said in a hollow voice, but with dry eyes, "My boy, you shall never marry a bankrupt's daughter."

Anselme looked Birotteau steadily in the face.

"Will you promise, sir, in the presence of your whole family, to consent to our marriage, if mademoiselle will take me for her husband, on the day when you shall have paid all your creditors in full?"

There was a moment's pause. Every one felt the influence of the emotion recorded in the perfumer's weary face.

"Yes," he said at last.

Anselme stretched out his hand to Césarine with an indescribable gesture; she gave him hers, and he kissed it.

"Do you also consent?" he asked her.

"Yes," she said.

"So I am really one of the family. I have a right to interest myself in your affairs," was his comment, with an enigmatical look.

Anselme hurried away lest he should betray a joy in too great contrast with his master's trouble. Anselme was not exactly delighted with the bankruptcy; but so absolute, so egoistical is love, that Césarine herself in her inmost heart felt a glow of happiness strangely at variance with her bitter distress of mind.

"While we are about it, let us strike every blow at once," said Pillerault, and in Constance's ear.

An involuntary gesture, a sign not of assent, but of sorrow, was Mme. Birotteau's answer.

"What do you mean to do, nephew?" said Pillerault, turning to César.

"To continue the business."

"I am not of that opinion," said Pillerault. "Go into liquidation, let your assets go to your creditors in the shape of dividend, and go out of business altogether. I have often thought what I should do if I were placed in a similar position. (Oh! you must be prepared for everything! The merchant who does not contemplate possible insolvency is like a general who does not lay his account with a defeat; he is only half a merchant.) I myself should never have gone on again. What! Be compelled to blush before men whom I should have wronged, to endure their suspicious looks and unspoken reproaches? I can think of the guillotine—in one instant all is over; but to carry a head on your shoulders to have it cut off daily, is a kind of torture from which I should escape. Plenty of men begin again as though nothing had happened; so much the better for them!—they are braver than Claude-Joseph Pillerault. If you pay your way (and pay ready-money you must), people will say that you managed to save something for yourself; and if you have not a half-penny, you will never recover. 'Tis good-evening to you. Surrender your assets, let them sell you up, and do something else."

"But what?" asked César.

"Eh! try for a place under the Government," said Pillerault; "you have influence, have you not? There are the Duc and Duchesse de Lenoncourt, Mme. de Mortsauf, M. de Vandenesse! Write to them, go to see them, they will find you some post in the Household, with a thousand crowns or so hanging to it; your wife will earn as much again; your daughter, perhaps, may do the same. The case is not desperate. You three among you will earn something like ten thousand francs a year. In ten years' time, you will be in a position to pay a hundred thousand francs, for you will have no expenses meanwhile; your womankind shall have fifteen hundred francs from me; and, as for you, we shall see."

It was Constance, and not César, who pondered these wise words, and Pillerault went on 'Change. At that time stockbrokers used to congregate in a provisional structure of planks and scaffolding, a large circular room, with an entrance in the Rue Feydeau. The perfumer's failure was already known, and had created a sensation in high commercial circles, for their prevailing politics were Constitutional at that time. Birotteau was a conspicuous personage, and envied by many. Merchants, on the other hand, who leaned towards Liberalism, regarded Birotteau's too celebrated ball as an audacious attempt to trade on their sentiments, for the Opposition were fain to monopolize patriotism. Royalists were allowed to love the King, but the love of their country was the exclusive privilege of the Left, the Left was for the people; and those in power had no right to rejoice thus vicariously through the administration, in a national event which the Liberals meant to exploit for their own benefit. For which reasons the fall of a Ministerialist in favor at Court, of an incorrigible Royalist who had insulted Liberty by fighting against the glorious French Revolution on Vendémiaire 13th, set all tongues wagging on 'Change, and was received with applause.

Pillerault wanted to know what was being said, and to study public opinion. He went up to one of the most eager

groups; du Tillet, Gobenheim-Keller, Nucingen, old Guillaume and his son-in-law Joseph Lebas, Claparon, Gigonnet, Mongenod, Camusot, Gobseck, Adolphe Keller, Palma, Chiffreville, Matifat, Grindot, and Lourdois were discussing the news.

"Well, well, how careful one had need to be!" said Gobenheim, addressing du Tillet; "my brothers-in-law all but opened an account with Birotteau, it was a near thing."

"I am let in for ten thousand francs myself," said du Tillet; "he came to me a fortnight ago, and I let him have the money on his bare signature. But he obliged me once, and I shall lose it without regret."

"Your nephew is like the rest," said Lourdois, addressing Pillerault. "Gave entertainments. I can imagine that a rogue might try to throw dust in your eyes to induce confidence; but how could a man who passed for the cream of honest folk descend to the stale mountebank's trickery that never fails to catch us?"

"Like leeches," commented Gobseck.

"Only trust a man if he lives in a den like Claparon," said Gigonnet.

"Vell," said the stout Baron Nucingen, for du Tillet's benefit, "you haf dried to blay me a nice drick, sending Pirôdôt to me. I do not know," he went on, turning to Gobenheim the manufacturer, "why he did not send roundt to me for vifty tousend vranes; I should haf led him haf dem."

"Oh! not you, M. le Baron," said Joseph Lebas. "You must have known quite well that the Bank had refused his paper; you were on the Discount Committee which declined it. This poor man, for whom I still feel a very great respect, fails under singular circumstances——"

Pillerault grasped Joseph Lebas' hand.

"It is, in fact, impossible to explain how the thing has happened," said Mongenod, "except by the theory that there is some one behind Gigonnet, some banker whose intention it is to spoil the Madeleine speculation."

"The thing which has happened to him always happens to people who go out of their own line," said Claparon, interrupting Mongenod. "If he had brought out his Cephalic Oil himself, instead of sending up the price of building lots in Paris by rushing into land speculation, he would have lost his hundred thousand francs through Roguin, but he would not have gone bankrupt. He will start afresh under the name of Popinot."

"Keep an eye on Popinot," said Gigonnet.

According to this crowd of merchants, Roguin was "poor Roguin"; the perfumer was "that unlucky Birotteau." A great passion seemed to excuse the one, the other appeared the more to blame on account of his pretensions. Gigonnet left the Exchange, and took the Rue Perrin-Gasselin on his way home to the Rue Grenétat. He looked in on Mme. Madou, the dry fruit saleswoman.

"Well, old lady," said he, with his cruel good-humor, "and how are we getting on in our way of business?"

"Middling," said Mme. Madou respectfully, and she offered the money-lender her only armchair with a friendly officiousness which she had never shown to any one else but the dear departed.

Mother Madou, who would fell a carman with a blow if he were refractory or carried a joke too far, who had not feared to assist at the storming of the Tuileries on the 10th of October, who railed at her best customers (for that matter, she was capable of heading a deputation of the Dames de la Halle, and speaking to the King himself without a tremor)—Angélique Madou received Gigonnet with the utmost respect. She was helpless in his presence; she winced under his hard eyes. It will be a long while yet before the executioner ceases to be a terror to the people, and Gigonnet was the executioner of the small traders. The man who sets money in circulation is more looked up to in the Great Market than any other power; all other human institutions are as nought compared with him. For them the Commissaire is Justice personified, and with the Commissaire they of the

Market become familiar. But the sight of the money-lender entrenched behind his green cardboard cases, of the usurer whom they implore with fear in their hearts, dries up the sources of wit, parches the throat, and abashes the bold eyes; the people grew respectful in his presence.

"Have you come to ask something of me?" said she.

"A mere trifle; be prepared to refund the amount of Birotteau's bills, the old man has gone bankrupt, so all outstanding claims must be sent in; I shall send you in a statement to-morrow."

The pupils of Mme. Madou's eyes first contracted like the eyes of a cat, then flames leapt forth from them.

"O the beggar! O the scamp! and he came here himself to tell me that he was deputy-mayor, piling on his lies! The Lord ha' mercy! That's just the way with business; there is no trusting mayors nowadays; the Government cheats us! You wait, I will have the money out of them, I will——"

"Eh! everyone comes out of this sort of thing the best way he can, my little dear!" said Gigonnet, lifting one leg with the precise little gesture of a cat picking its way among puddles, a trick to which he owed his nickname.* "Some swells have been let in who mean to get themselves out of the scrape——"

"Good! good! I will get my hazel-nuts out.—Marie Jeanne! my clogs and my lamb's-wool shawl. Quick! or I will lend you a clout that will warm your cheeks."

"That will make it hot for them yonder up the street," said Gigonnet to himself, as he rubbed his hands. "Du Tillet will be satisfied; there will be a scandal in the Quarter. What that poor devil of a perfumer can have done to him, I don't know; for my own part, I am as sorry for the man as for a dog with a broken paw. He isn't a man; he has no fight in him."

Mme. Madou broke out like an insurrection in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine towards seven o'clock that evening, and swept to the luckless Birotteau's door, which she opened with unnecessary violence, for her walk had had an exciting effect.

* Gigonnet, from *Gigotter*, to kick the legs about.

"Brood of vermin, I must have my money, I want my money! You give me my money! or I will have sachets and satin gimcracks and fans till I have the worth of my two thousand francs! A mayor robbing the people! Did any one ever see the like! If you don't pay me, I will send him to jail; I will go for the public prosecutor; I will put the whole posse of them on his tracks! I do not stir from here without my money, in fact."

She looked as if she would open the glass door of a cupboard in which expensive goods were kept.

"The Madou is helping herself," said Célestin, speaking in a low voice to his neighbor. The lady overheard the remark, for during a paroxysm of rage the senses are either deadened, or preternaturally alert, according to the temperament. She bestowed on Célestin the most vigorous box on the ear ever given and received in a perfumer's shop.

"Learn to respect women, my cherub," quoth she, "and not to bedraggle the names of the people you rob."

Mme. Birotteau came forward from the back shop. Her husband by chance was also there; in spite of Pillerault, he chose to remain, carrying his humility and obedience to the law so far as to be ready to submit to be put in prison. "Madame," said Constance, "for Heaven's sake, do not bring a crowd together in the street."

"Eh! let them come in," cried the saleswoman; "I will tell them about it; it will make them laugh! Yes, my goods and the francs I made by the sweat of my brow go for you to give balls. You go dressed like a Queen of France, forsooth, and fleece poor lambs like me for the wool! *Jésus!* stolen goods would burn *my* shoulders, I know! I have nothing but shoddy on my carcase, but it is my own! Bandits and thieves! my money, or——"

She pounced upon a pretty inlaid case full of costly perfumery.

"Leave it alone, madame," said César, appearing on the scene; "nothing here belongs to me, it is all the property of my creditors; I have nothing left but myself; and if you

have a mind to seize me and put me in jail, I give you my word of honor" (a tear overflowed his eyes at this) "that I will wait here for your process-server, police-officer, and bailiff's men."

From his tone and gesture, he evidently meant to do as he said; Mme. Madou's anger died down.

"A notary has absconded with my money, and the disasters which I cause come through no fault of mine," César went on; "but in time you shall be paid, if I have to work myself to death and earn the money by my hands as a market-porter."

"Come, you are a good man," said the market woman. "Excuse my speaking, madame; but I shall have to fling myself into the river, for Gigomet will be down upon me, and I have nothing but bills at ten months to give for your cursed paper."

"Come round and see me to-morrow morning," said Pillerault, coming forward; "I will arrange the business for you at five per cent with a friend of mine."

"*Quien!* that is good Father Pillerault!—Why, yes, he is your uncle," she went on, turning to Constance. "Come, now, you are honest folk; I shall not lose anything, shall I?—Good-bye till to-morrow, old Brutus," she added, for the benefit of the retired ironmonger.

César insisted on remaining amid the ruins of his glory, and would hear of no other course; he said that by so doing he could explain his position to all his creditors. In this determination, Uncle Pillerault upheld César in spite of the entreaties of his niece. César was persuaded to go upstairs, and then the wily old man hurried to M. Haudry, put César's case before him, obtained a prescription for a sleeping-draught, had it made up, and went back to spend the evening in his nephew's house. With Césarine's assistance, he constrained César to drink as they did; the narcotic did its work; and fourteen hours later Birotteau awoke to find himself in Pillerault's own bedroom in the Rue des Bourdonnais, a prisoner in the house of his uncle, who slept on a camp bedstead put up in the sitting-room.

When Pillerault had put César into the cab, and Constance had heard it roll away, then her courage failed her. Our strength is often called forth by the necessity of sustaining some one weaker than ourselves; and the poor woman, now that she was left alone with her daughter, wept as she would have wept for César if he had been lying dead.

"Mamma," said Césarine, seating herself on her mother's knee, with the gracious kitten-like ways that women only display for each other, "you said that if I bore my part bravely, you would be able to face adversity. So do not cry, mother dear. I am ready to work in a shop; I will forget what we have been; I will be a forewoman, as you were when you were a girl; you shall never hear a regret or a complaint from me. And I have a hope. Did you not hear M. Popinot?"

"Dear boy! he shall not be my son-in-law."

"Oh! mamma——"

"He will be my own son."

"There is this one good thing about trouble, it teaches us to know our real friends," said Césarine; and, changing places with her mother, she at last comforted her, and soothed the poor woman's grief.

The next morning Constance left a note for the Duc de Lenoncourt, one of the first Gentlemen of the Bedchamber. She asked for an interview at a certain hour. Meanwhile, she went to M. de la Billardière, told him of the predicament in which César found himself in consequence of Roguin's flight from the country, and begged the mayor to give her his support with the Duke, and to speak for her, for she feared that she might express herself ill. She wanted some post for Birotteau. Birotteau would be the most honest of cashiers, if there are degrees in the quality of honesty.

"The King has just appointed the Comte de Fontaine as Comptroller-General of the Royal Household; there is no time to be lost."

At two o'clock La Billardière and Mme. César ascended the great staircase of the Hôtel de Lenoncourt in the Rue Saint-Dominique, and were brought into the presence of

one of the nobles highest in the King's favor, in so far as Louis XVIII. could be said to have preferences. The gracious reception accorded to her by a great noble, one of the little group who formed a connecting link between the eighteenth-century noblesse and those of the nineteenth, put hope into Mme. César. The perfumer's wife was great and simple in her sorrow; sorrow ennobles the most commonplace natures, for it has a grandeur of its own, but only those who are true and sincere can take its polish. Constance was essentially sincere. It was a question of prompt application to the King.

In the midst of the discussion, M. de Vandenesse was announced.

"Here is your deliverer," exclaimed the Duke.

Mme. Birotteau was not unknown to the young man, who had been once or twice to the perfumer's shop for those trifles which are often of as much importance as great things. The Duke explained La Billardière's views; and when Vandenesse learned the disasters, he went immediately with La Billardière to see the Comte de Fontaine on behalf of the Marquise d'Uxelles' godson. Mme. Birotteau was asked to await the result.

M. le Comte de Fontaine, like La Billardière, was one of the provincial noblesse, the almost unknown heroes of La Vendée. Birotteau was no stranger to him, for he had seen the perfumer at the *Queen of Roses* in former days. At that time, those who had shed their blood for the Royalist cause enjoyed privileges, which the King kept secret for fear of hurting Liberal susceptibilities, and M. de Fontaine, one of the King's favorites, was supposed to be in the confidence of Louis XVIII. Not only did this influential person definitely promise to obtain a post for the perfumer, but he went to the Duc de Lenoncourt, then in attendance, to ask him for a moment's speech with the King that evening, and to entreat for La Billardière an audience with Monsieur the King's brother, who had a particular regard for the old Vendean.

That very evening M. le Comte de Fontaine came from

the Tuileries to inform Mme. Birotteau that as soon as her husband had received his discharge, he would be appointed to a post worth two thousand five hundred francs per annum in the Sinking Fund Department, all places in the Household being at that time filled with noble supernumeraries to whom the Royalist family were bound.

This success was but a part of the task undertaken by Mme. Birotteau. The poor woman went to Joseph Lebas at the sign of the *Cat and Racket* in the Rue Saint-Denis. On the way thither she met Mme. Roguin in her showy carriage, doubtless on a shopping expedition. Their eyes met, and the visible confusion on the beautiful face of the notary's wife, at this meeting with the woman who had been brought to ruin, gave Constance courage.

"Never will I drive in a carriage paid for with other people's money," said she to herself.

Welcomed by Joseph Lebas, she asked him to look for a situation for her daughter in some respectable house of business. Lebas made no promises, but a week later it was arranged that Césarine should be placed in a branch of one of the largest drapery establishments in Paris, which had just been opened in the Quartier des Italiens. She was to live in the house, and to take charge of the shop and counting-house, with a salary of three thousand francs. She would represent the master and mistress, and the forewoman was to act under her orders.

As for Mme. César herself, she went on the same day to ask Popinot to allow her to take charge of the books, the correspondence, and the household. Popinot knew well that this was the one commercial house in which the perfumer's wife might take a subordinate position and still receive the respect due to her. The noble-hearted boy installed her in his house, gave her a salary of three thousand francs, arranged to give his own room to her, and went up into the attic. And so it came to pass that the beautiful woman, after one short month spent amid novel splendors, was compelled to take up her abode in the poor room where Gaudissart, Anselme, and Finot had inaugurated the Cephalic Oil.

The Tribunal of Commerce had appointed Molineux as agent, and he came to take formal possession of César's property. Constance, with Célestin's help, went through the inventory with him; and then mother and daughter went to stay with Pillerault. They went out on foot, and simply dressed, and without turning their heads, and this was their leave-taking of the house in which they had spent the third part of a lifetime. Silently they walked to the Rue des Bourdonnais, and dined with César, for the first time since their separation. It was a melancholy dinner. They had each had time to think over the position, to weigh the burden laid upon them, to estimate their courage. All three were like sailors, prepared to face the coming tempest without blinking the danger. Birotteau took heart again when he heard that great personages had interested themselves for him and provided for his future; but he broke down when he heard of the arrangement which had been made for his daughter. Then hearing how bravely his wife had begun to work again, he held out his hand to her.

Tears filled Pillerault's eyes for the last time in his life at the sight of this pathetic picture of the father, mother, and daughter united in one embrace; while Birotteau, the most helpless and downcast of the three, held up his hand and cried, "We must hope!"

"To save expense, you must live here with me; you shall have my room, and share my bread. For a long time past I have been tired of living alone; you will take the place of that poor boy I lost. And it will only be a step from here to your office in the Rue d'Oratoire."

"Merciful God!" cried Birotteau. "There is a star to guide me when the storm is at its height."

By resignation to his fate, the victim of a misfortune consumes his misfortune. Birotteau could fall no further; he had accepted the position; he became strong again.

In France when a merchant has filed his petition, the only thing he need trouble himself to do is to retreat to some oasis at home or abroad where he may passively exist like the child

that he is in the eye of the law; theoretically he is a minor, and incapable of acting in any capacity as a citizen.* Practically, however, he is by no means a nullity. He does not, indeed, show his face until he receives a "certificate of immunity from arrest" (which no registrar nor creditor has been known to refuse), for if he is found at large without it he is liable to be put in prison; but once provided with his safe conduct, his flag of truce, he can take a stroll through the enemy's camp, not from idle curiosity, but to counteract and thwart the evil intentions of the law with regard to bankrupts.

A prodigious development of perverse ingenuity is the direct result of any law which touches private interests. The one thought of a bankrupt, as of everybody else who finds his purposes crossed in any way by the law of the land, is how to evade it. The period of civil death, during which time a bankrupt must be considered as a kind of commercial chrysalis, lasts for three months or thereabouts, the interval required for the formalities which must be gone through before creditors and debtor sign a treaty of peace, otherwise known as a *concordat,* a word which indicates sufficiently clearly that concord reigns after the storm raised by the clashing of various interests which run counter to one another.

Directly the schedule is deposited, the Tribunal of Commerce appoints a registrar to watch over the interests of the throng of unascertained creditors on the one hand, and on the other to protect the bankrupt from the vexatious importunities and inroads of infuriated creditors, a double part which presents magnificent possibilities if registrars had but time to develop them. The registrar authorizes an agent by procuration, to take formal possession of the bankrupt's property, bills, and effects, and the agent checks the statement of assets in the schedule; lastly, the clerk of the court convenes a meeting of creditors, by tuck of drum, that is to say, by ad-

*In France a bankrupt loses his civil and political status; he recovers the right of administering his own affairs after his discharge: but the disabilities are only removed by Rehabilitation. This is an order granted by the Court when it is proved that the bankrupt has paid debts and costs in full.

vertisements in the newspapers. The creditors, genuine or otherwise, are called upon to assemble and agree among themselves to appoint provisional trustees, who shall replace the agent, step into the bankrupt's shoes, and, by a legal fiction, become indeed the bankrupt himself. These have power to realize everything, to make compromises, or to sell outright; in short, to wind up the whole business for the benefit of the creditors, provided that the bankrupt makes no opposition. As a rule, in Paris the bankruptcy is not carried beyond the stage of the provisional trustees, and for the following reasons:

The nomination of trustees is a proceeding calculated to stir up more angry feeling than any other resolution which can be passed by an assembly of men, deluded, baffled, befooled, ensnared, bamboozled, robbed, cheated, and thirsting for vengeance; and albeit, as a general thing, the creditor is cheated, robbed, bamboozled, ensnared, befooled, baffled, and deluded, in Paris no commercial crisis, no feeling, however high, can last for three mortal months. Nothing in commerce but a bill of exchange is capable of starting up clamorous for payment at the expiration of ninety days. Before the three months are out, all the creditors, exhausted by the wear and tear, and worn out by the marches and counter-marches of the liquidation, sleep soundly by the side of their excellent little wives. These facts may enable those who are not Frenchmen to understand how it comes to pass that the appointment of provisional trustees is usually final; out of a thousand provisional trustees, there are not five who are appointed to carry the thing further. The reasons of the swift abjuration of commercial enmity which has its source in a failure may be imagined; but for those who have not the good fortune to be merchants, some explanation of the drama known as a bankruptcy is necessary if they are to comprehend how it constitutes the most monstrous legal farce in Paris, and understand the ordinary rule to which César's case was to be so marked an exception.

A failure in business is a thrilling drama in three distinct

acts. Act the first may be called The Agent; act the second, The Trustees; and act the third, The *Concordat*, or payment of composition. The spectacle is twofold, as is the case with plays performed on the stage; for there is the spectacular effect intended for the public, and the more or less invisible mechanism by which the effects are produced, and the same play if seen before and behind the scenes looks quite different from different points of view. In the wings stand the bankrupt and his attorney (one of the advocates who practise at the Tribunal of Commerce), and the trustees and agent and the registrar complete the list.

Nobody outside Paris knows what no Parisian can fail to know, that a registrar is the most extraordinary kind of magistrate which the freaks of civilization have devised. In the first place, he is a judge who, at every moment of his official life, may go in fear that his own measure may be dealt to him again. Paris has even seen the President of her Tribunal of Commerce compelled to file his petition; and the ordinary judge, who is called upon to act as a registrar, is no venerable merchant retired from business, whose magistracy is a tribute to a stainless career; but the active senior partner of some great house, a man burdened with the responsibility of vast enterprises. It is a *sine qua non* that a judge who is bound to give decisions on the torrents of commercial disputes which pour incessantly upon the capital shall have as much, or more, business of his own than he can manage.

Thus the Tribunal of Commerce, which might have been a useful transition stage and half-way house between the trading community and the regions of the *noblesse*, is composed of busy merchants, who may one day be made to suffer for unpopular awards, and a Birotteau among them may find a du Tillet.

The judge or registrar, therefore, is of necessity a personage in whose presence a great deal is said to which perforce he lends an ear, thinking the while of his private concerns. He is very apt to leave public business in the hands of the trustees and the attorneys who practise at the Tribunal of

Commerce, unless some odd and unusual case turns up; some instance of theft under curious circumstances, to draw from him the remark that either the creditor or the debtor must be a clever fellow. This personage, set on high above the scene, like the portrait of a king in an audience-chamber, is to be seen of a morning from five to seven o'clock in his yard, if he is a timber merchant; in his shop, if, like Birotteau, he is a perfumer; and again, in the evening at dessert after dinner, but always and in any case terribly busy. For these reasons this functionary is usually dumb.

Let us do justice to the law; the registrar's hands are tied by the hasty legislation which provided for these matters; and many a time he sanctions frauds which he is powerless to hinder, as will shortly be seen.

The agent, instead of being the creditors' man, may play into the debtor's hands. Each creditor hopes to swell his share, and in some way to make better terms for himself with the bankrupt, whom every one suspects of a secret hoard. The agent can make something out of both sides, by dealing leniently with the bankrupt on the one hand, or on the other by securing something for the more influential creditors, and in this way can hold with the hare and run with the hounds. Not unfrequently a crafty agent has annulled a judgment by buying out the creditors and releasing the merchant, who springs up again at a rebound like an india-rubber ball.

The agent turns to the best furnished crib; he will, if necessary, cover the largest creditors and let the debtor go bare, or he will sacrifice the creditors to the merchant's future, as suits him best. So the whole drama turns on the first act; and the agent, like the attorney of the Tribunal, is the utility-man in a piece in which neither will play unless he is sure of his fees beforehand. In nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, the agent is for the debtor.

At the time when this story took place, it was the practice of attorneys at the Tribunal of Commerce to go to the judge who was to act as registrar and nominate a man of their own, some one who knew something of the debtor's affairs and

could manage to reconcile the interests of the many and of the one—the honorable trader who had fallen into misfortune. Of late years it has been the practice of shrewd judges to wait till this has been done so as to avoid the nominee, and to make an effort to appoint a man of passable integrity.

During this first act the creditors, genuine or presumed, present themselves to select the provisional trustees, an appointment which, as has been said, is practically final. In this electoral assembly every creditor has a voice, whether his claim is for fifty sous or fifty thousand francs, and the votes are reckoned by count and not by weight. The names of the trustees are proposed at the meeting, packed by the debtor with sham creditors (the only ones who never fail to put in an appearance); and from the names thus sent in, the registrar, the powerless president, is *bound* to choose those who shall act. Naturally, therefore, the registrar takes the trustees from the debtor's hands, another abuse which turns this catastrophe into one of the most burlesque dramas sanctioned by a court of justice. The "honorable trader fallen into misfortune" is master of the situation, and proceeds to carry out a premeditated robbery with the law at his back. In Paris, as a rule, the petty tradesmen are blameless. Before a shopkeeper files his schedule, the poor honest fellow has left no stone unturned; he has sold his wife's shawl, and pawned his spoons and forks; and when he gives in at last, it is with empty hands, he is utterly ruined, and has not even money to pay the attorney, who troubles himself very little about his client.

The law demands that the *concordat,* which remits a part of the debt and restores the debtor to the management of his affairs, should be put to the vote and carried by a sufficient majority, with due regard to the amounts claimed by the voters. To secure the majority is a great feat which demands the most skilful diplomacy on the part of the debtor, his attorney, and the trustees amid the clash of conflicting interests. The ordinary commonplace stratagem consists in offering to such a body of the creditors as will represent the ma-

jority required by the law, a premium to be paid over and above the dividend which the meeting of creditors is to consent to accept. For this gigantic swindle there is no remedy. Successive Tribunals of Commerce, familiar with it by dint of practice in non-official capacity, and grown wise by experience, have decided of late that all claims are made void where there is a suspicion of fraud; thus it is to the debtor's interest to complain of the "extortion," and the judges of the Tribunal hope in this way to raise the moral tone of proceedings in liquidation. But they will only succeed in making matters worse; creditors will exercise their ingenuity to invent still more rascally devices which the judges will brand as registrars, and profit by as merchants.

Another extremely popular expedient, which gave rise to the expression "serious and legitimate creditor," consists in creating creditors, much as du Tillet created a firm of bankers. By introducing a sufficient number of Claparons into the meeting, the debtor, in these diverse manifestations, receives a share of the spoils, and sensibly diminishes the dividends of the real creditors. This plan has a double advantage. The debtor obtains resources for the future, and at the same time secures the proper number of votes representing (to all appearance) a sufficient proportion of the claims upon the estate, the majority necessary for his discharge. These "gay bogus creditors" are like sham electors in the electoral college. What help has the "serious *bonâ-fide* creditor" against his "gay, bogus" compeer? He can rid himself of him by attacking him! Very good. But if the "serious and *bonâ-fide*" creditor means to oust the intruder, he must leave his own business to take care of itself, and he must employ an attorney; and as the said attorney makes little or nothing out of the case, he prefers to "conduct" bankruptcies, and does not take a bit of pettifogging business too seriously. Then, at the outset, before the "gay and bogus" one can be unearthed, a labyrinth of procedure must be entered upon, the bankrupt's books must be gone through to some remote epoch, and application must be made to the Court to require

that the books of the pretended creditor shall be likewise produced; the improbability of the fiction must be set forth and clearly proved to the satisfaction of the judges of the Tribunal, and the serious creditor must come and go and plead and arouse interest in the indifferent. This Quixotic performance, moreover, must be gone through afresh in each separate case; and each gay and bogus creditor, if fairly convicted of "gaiety," makes his bow to the court with an "Excuse me, there is some mistake; I am very serious indeed." All this is done without prejudice to the rights of the debtor, who may appeal and bring Don Quixote into the Court-Royal. And in the meantime Don Quixote's own affairs go askew, and he too may be compelled to file his schedule.

Moral: Let the debtor choose his trustees, verify the claims, and arrange the amount of composition himself.

Given these conditions, who cannot imagine the underhand schemes, the tricks worthy of Sganarelle, stratagems that a Frontin might have devised, the lies that would do credit to a Mascarille, the empty wallets of a Scapin, and all the results of these two systems? Any bankruptcy since insolvency came into fashion would supply a writer with material sufficient to fill the fourteen volumes of *Clarissa Harlowe*. A single example shall suffice.

The illustrious Gobseck, the master at whose feet the Palmas, Gigonnets, Werbrusts, Kellers, and Nucingens of Paris have sat, once found himself among the creditors of a bankrupt who had managed to swindle him, and whom, on that account, he proposed to handle roughly. Of this person he received bills to fall due *after the discharge* for a sum which (taken together with the dividends received at the time) should pay the amount owing to him (Gobseck) in full. Gobseck, in consequence, recommended that a final dividend of twenty-five per cent be paid. Behold the creditors swindled for Gobseck's benefit! But the merchant had signed the illegal bills in the name of the insolvent firm; and when the time came, a dividend of twenty-five per cent was all that he could be made to pay upon them, and Gobseck, the great Gob-

seck, received a bare fifty per cent. He always took off his hat with ironical respect when he met that debtor.

As all transactions which take place within ten days before the time when a man files his schedule are open to question, certain prudent prospective bankrupts are careful to break ground early, and to approach some of their creditors, whose interest it is, not less than their own, to arrive at a prompt settlement. Then the more astute creditors will go in search of the simple or of the very busy, paint the failure in the darkest colors, and finally buy up their claims for half their value. When the estate is liquidated, these shrewd folk come by the dividend on their own share, and make fifty, thirty, or twenty-five per cent on the liabilities which they have purchased, and in this way contrive to lose nothing.

After the failure is declared, the house in which a few bags of money yet remain from the pillage is more or less hermetically sealed. Happy the merchant who can effect an entrance by the window, the roof, the cellar, or a hole in the wall, and secure a bag to swell his share! When things have come to this pass, this Beresina, where the cry of "Each for himself" has been raised, it is hard to say what is illegal or legal, false or true, honest or dishonest. A creditor is thought a clever fellow if he "covers himself"; that is to say, if he secures himself at the expense of the rest. All France once rang with discussion of a prodigious failure, which took place in a certain city where there was a Court-Royal; the magistrates therein being all personally interested in the case, arrayed their shoulders in waterproof cloaks so heavy, that the mantle of justice was worn into holes, on which grounds it was necessary to transfer the affair into another court. There was no registrar, no agent, no final judgment possible in the bankrupt's own district.

In Paris these commercial quicksands are so thoroughly well appreciated, that every merchant, however much time he may have on his hands, accepts the loss as an uninsured accident; and, unless he is involved for some very large sum, passes the matter to the wrong side of his profit and loss ac-

count. He is not so foolish as to waste time over wasted money; he prefers to keep his own pot boiling. As for the little trader, hard put to it to pay his monthly accounts, and tied to the narrow round of his own business, tedious law proceedings, involving a heavy initial outlay, scare him; he gives up the attempt to see through the matter, follows the example of the great merchant, and makes up his mind to his loss. Wholesale merchants do not file their schedule in these days; they liquidate by private arrangement; their creditors take what is offered them, and give a receipt in full; a plan which saves publicity, and the delays of the law, and solicitors' fees, and depreciation of stock consequent on a sudden realization. It is a common belief that it pays better to have a private arrangement than to force the estate into bankruptcy, so private arrangements are more frequent than failures in Paris.

The second act of the drama is intended to prove that a trustee is incorruptible; that there is not the slightest attempt at collusion between them and the debtor. The audience, who have most of them been at some time cast for the part of trustees themselves, know that a trustee is another name for a creditor whose claims are "covered." He listens, and believes as much as he pleases, till, after three months spent in investigating liabilities and assets, the day comes when composition is offered and accepted. Then the provisional trustees read a little report for the assembled creditors. The following is a general formula:

"GENTLEMEN,—The total amount owing to us was one million. We have dismantled our man like a stranded frigate. The sale of old iron, timber, and copper has brought in three hundred thousand francs, the assets therefore amount to thirty per cent of the liabilities. In our joy at finding this sum, when our debtor might have left us a bare hundred thousand francs, we proclaim him to be an Aristides. We vote him crowns and a premium by way of encouragement! We propose to leave him his assets, and to give him ten or a dozen years in which to pay us the dividend of fifty per cent, which

he condescends to promise us. Here is the *concordat,* walk up to the desk, and put your names to it!"

At these words the happy creditors fall on each other's necks and congratulate one another. When the *concordat* has been ratified by the Tribunal, the merchant's assets are put at his disposition, and he begins business again as if nothing had happened. He is at liberty to fail once more over the payment of the promised dividends—a sort of great-grandchild of a failure, which not seldom appears like an infant borne by a mother nine months after she has married her daughter.

If the *concordat* is not accepted, the creditors forthwith make a final appointment of trustees. They resort to extreme measures, and band themselves together to exploit the debtor's property and business; they lay their hands on everything he has or may have, his reversionary rights in the property of father and mother, uncles and aunts, and the like. This is a desperate remedy found by a "union of the creditors."

If a man fails in business, therefore, there are two ways open to him; by the first method, he takes things into his own hands, and means to recover himself; in the second, having fallen into the water, he is content to go to the bottom. Pillerault knew the difference well. He was of Ragon's opinion, that it was as hard to issue from the first experience with clean hands as to emerge from the second a wealthy man. He counseled surrender at discretion, and betook himself to the most upright attorney on 'Change, asking him to conduct the liquidation, and to put the proceeds at the disposition of the creditors. The law requires that the creditors should make an allowance for the support of the debtor and his family while the drama is in progress. Pillerault gave notice to the registrar that he himself would maintain his niece and nephew.

Du Tillet had planned everything with a view to prolonging the agony of his old master's failure, and in the following manner. Time is so valuable in Paris, that, though there

are usually two trustees appointed, one only acts in the case; the other is nominated for form's sake; he approves the proceedings, like the second notary in a notarial deed; and the active trustee as often as not leaves the work to the attorney employed by the bankrupt. By these means a failure of the first kind is conducted so vigorously that everything is patched up, fixed, settled, and arranged during the minimum time required by the legal procedure. In a hundred days the registrar might repeat the cold-blooded epigram of the Minister who announced that "Order reigns in Warsaw."

Du Tillet meant to make an end of César, commercially speaking. So the names of the trustees appointed through his influence had an ominous sound for Pillerault. M. Bidault, otherwise Gigonnet, the principal creditor, was to do nothing. Molineux, the fidgety little old person who had lost nothing, was to do everything. Du Tillet had thrown this noble corpse of a business to the little jackal to worry before he devoured it.

Little Molineux went home after the meeting of creditors at which the trustees were appointed, "honored" (so he put it) "by the suffrages of his fellow-citizens," and as happy in the prospect of domineering over Birotteau as an urchin who has an insect to torment. The owner of house-property, being a stickler for the law, bought a copy of the *Code of Commerce,* and asked du Tillet to give him the benefit of his lights. Luckily, Joseph Lebas, forewarned by Pillerault, had, at the outset, obtained a sagacious and benevolent registrar, and Gobenheim-Keller (on whom du Tillet had fixed his choice) was replaced by M. Camusot, an assistant judge, and Pillerault's landlord, a Liberal, and a rich silk merchant, spoken of as an honorable man.

One of the most dreadful scenes in César's life was his enforced conference with little Molineux; the creature whom he had looked upon as such a nullity was now, by legal fiction, become César Birotteau. There was no help for it; so, accompanied by his uncle, he climbed the six pair of stairs in the Cour Batave, reached the old man's dismal room, and con-

fronted his guardian, his *quasi* judge, the man who represented the body of his creditors.

"What is the matter?" Pillerault asked on the stairs, hearing a groan from César.

"Oh! uncle, you do not know what kind of a man this Molineux is."

"I have seen him at the Café David these fifteen years; he plays a game of dominoes there of an evening now and then. That is why I came with you."

Molineux was prodigiously civil to Pillerault, and his manner towards the bankrupt was contemptuously patronizing. The little old man had thought out his course, studied his behavior down to the minutest details, and his ideas were ready prepared.

"What information do you want?" asked Pillerault. "None of the claims are disputed."

"Oh! the claims are all in order," said little Molineux; "they are all verified. The creditors are serious and *bonâ-fide!* But there's the law, sir; there's the law! The bankrupt's expenditure is out of proportion to his means. It appears that the ball——"

"At which you were an invited guest," put in Pillerault.

"Cost nearly sixty thousand francs! At any rate, that amount was spent on the occasion, and the debtor's capital at that time only amounted to a hundred and some odd thousand francs! There is warrant sufficient for bringing the matter before a registrar-extraordinary, as a case of bankruptcy caused by serious mismanagement."

"Is that your opinion?" asked Pillerault, who noticed Birotteau's despondency at those words.

"Sir, the said Birotteau was a municipal officer, that makes a difference——"

"You did not send for us, I suppose, to tell us that the case was to be transferred to a criminal court," said Pillerault. "The whole Café David would laugh this evening at your conduct."

The little old man seemed to stand in some awe of the

opinion of the Café David; he gave Pillerault a scared look. He had reckoned upon dealing with Birotteau alone, and had promised himself that he would pose as sovereign lord and Jupiter. He had meant to strike terror into Birotteau's soul by the thunderbolts of a formal indictment, to brandish the axe above his head, to enjoy the spectacle of his anguish and alarm, and then to relent at the prayer of his victim, and send him away with eternal gratitude in his soul. But instead of the insect, he was confronted with this business-like old sphinx.

"There is nothing whatever to laugh at, sir!" said he.

"I beg your pardon," returned Pillerault. "You are consulting M. Claparon pretty freely; you are neglecting the interests of the other creditors to obtain a decision that you have preferential claims. Now I, as a creditor, can intervene. The registrar is there."

"Sir," said Molineux, "I am incorruptible."

"I know you are," said Pillerault; "you are only getting yourself out of the scrape, as the saying is. You are shrewd; you have done as you did in the case of that tenant of yours——"

"Oh! sir, my lawsuit in the matter of the Rue Montorgueil is not decided yet!" cried the trustee, slipping back into the landlord at the word, just as the cat who became a woman pounced upon the mouse. "A new issue, as they say, has been raised. It is not a sub-tenancy; he holds direct, and the scamp says now that as he paid his rent a year in advance, and there is only a year to run" (at this point Pillerault gave César a glance which recommended the closest attention to what should follow), "and the year's rent being prepaid, he might clear his furniture out of the premises. So there is a new lawsuit. As a matter of fact, I ought to look after my guarantees until I am paid in full; there may be repairs which the tenant ought to pay for."

"But you cannot distrain except for rent," remarked Pillerault.

"And accessories!" cried Molineux, attacked in the centre.

"The article in the Code is interpreted by the light of decisions; there are precedents. The law, however, certainly wants mending in this respect. At this moment I am drafting a petition to his lordship the Keeper of the Seals concerning the hiatus. It would become the Government to consider the interests of owners of property. The State depends upon us, for we bear the brunt of the taxes."

"You are well qualified to enlighten the Government," said Pillerault; "but on what point in this business of ours can we throw any light for you?"

"I want to know," said Molineux with imperious emphasis, "whether M. Birotteau has received any money from M. Popinot."

"No, sir," answered Birotteau. A discussion followed as to Birotteau's interest in the firm of Popinot, in the course of which it was decided that Popinot had a right to demand the repayment of his advances in full without putting in his claim under the bankruptcy as one of Birotteau's creditors for the half of the expenses of starting his business, which Birotteau ought to have paid. Gradually, under Pillerault's handling, Molineux became more and more civil, a symptom which proved that he set no little store on the opinion of the frequenters of the Café David. Before the interview ended he was condoling with Birotteau, and asked him no less than Pillerault to share his humble dinner. If the ex-perfumer had gone by himself, he would perhaps have exasperated Molineux, and brought rancor into the business; and now, as at some other times, old Pillerault played the part of guardian angel.

One horrible form of torture the law inflicts upon bankrupts; they are bound to appear in person with the provisional trustees and the registrar at the meeting of creditors which decides their fate. For a man who can rise above it, as for the merchant who is seeking his *revanche,* the dismal ceremony is not very formidable; but for any one like César the whole thing is an agony only paralleled by the last day in the condemned cell. Pillerault did all in his power to make that day endurable to his nephew.

Molineux's proceedings, sanctioned by the bankrupt, had been on this wise. The lawsuit concerning the mortgage on the property in the Faubourg du Temple had been gained in the Court of Appeal. The trustees decided to sell the land, and César made no objections. Du Tillet, knowing that the Government meant to construct a canal to open communication between Saint-Denis and the Upper Seine, and that the canal would pass through the Faubourg du Temple, bought César's property for seventy thousand francs. César's rights in the Madeleine building-land were abandoned to M. Claparon, on condition that he on his side should make no demand for half the registration fees, which César should have paid on the completion of the contract; it was arranged that Claparon should take over the land and pay for it, and receive the dividend in the bankruptcy which was due to the vendors.

The perfumer's interest in the firm of Popinot & Company was sold to the said Popinot for forty-eight thousand francs. Célestin Crevel bought the business as a going concern for fifty-seven thousand francs, together with the lease of the premises, the stock, the fittings, the proprietary rights in the Pâte des Sultanes and Carminative Toilet Lotion, a twelve years' lease of the factory and the plant being included in the sale.

The liquid assets reached a total of one hundred and ninety-five thousand francs, to which the trustees added seventy thousand francs from the liquidation of "that unlucky fellow Roguin." Two hundred and sixty-five thousand francs in all. The liabilities amounted to about four hundred and forty thousand francs, so that there would be a dividend of more than fifty per cent.

A liquidation is something like a chemical process, from which the clever insolvent merchant endeavors to emerge as a saturated solution. Birotteau, distilled entirely in this retort, yielded a result which infuriated du Tillet. Du Tillet thought that there would be a dishonoring bankruptcy, and behold a liquidation highly creditable to his man. He

cared very little about the pecuniary gain, for he would have the building-land by the Madeleine without opening his purse; he wished to see the poor merchant disgraced, ruined, and humbled in the dust. The meeting of creditors would doubtless carry out the perfumer in triumph on their shoulders.

As Birotteau's courage returned, his uncle, like a wise physician, gradually told him the details of the proceedings in bankruptcy. These rigorous measures were so many heavy blows. A merchant cannot but feel depressed when the things on which he has spent so much money and so much thought are sold for so little. He was petrified with astonishment at the tidings which Pillerault brought.

"Fifty-seven thousand francs for the *Queen of Roses!* Why, the stock is worth ten thousand francs! We spent forty thousand francs on the rooms, and the fittings, the plant, the moulds and boilers over at the factory cost thirty thousand francs! Why, if the things are sold for half their value, there is the worth of ten thousand francs in the shop, and the Pâte des Sultanes and the Lotion are as good as a farm!"

Poor ruined César's jeremiads did not alarm Pillerault very much. The old merchant took them much as a horse takes a shower of rain; but when he came to talk of the meeting of creditors, César's gloomy silence frightened him. Those who understand the weakness and vanity of human nature in every social sphere, will understand that for an ex-judge a return as a bankrupt to the Palais where he had sat was a ghastly form of torture. He must receive his enemies in the very place where he had been so often thanked for his services; he, Birotteau, whose views as to bankruptcy were so well known in Paris, he who had said, "A man who files his schedule is an honest man still, but by the time he comes out of a meeting of creditors he is a rogue." His uncle watched for favorable opportunities, and tried to accustom him to the idea of appearing before his creditors assembled, as the law requires. This condition was killing Birotteau.

His dumb resignation made a deep impression on Pillerault, who, through the thin partition wall, used to hear him cry at night. "Never! never! I will die sooner."

Pillerault, so strong himself by reason of his simple life, understood weakness. He made up his mind to spare Birotteau the anguish to which his nephew might succumb, the dreadful and inevitable meeting with his creditors! The law is precise, positive, and unflinching in this respect; the debtor who refuses to appear is liable on these grounds alone to have his case transferred out of the commercial into the criminal court. But if the law compels the appearance of the debtor, it exercises no such constraint upon the creditors.

A meeting of creditors is a mere formality except in certain cases; when, for example, a rogue is to be ousted, or the creditors unite to refuse the dividend offered, or cannot agree among themselves because some of their number are privileged to the prejudice of the rest, or the dividend offered is outrageously small, and the bankrupt is doubtful of obtaining a majority to carry the resolution. But when the estate has been honestly liquidated, or when a rascally debtor has squared everybody, the meeting is only a matter of form. So Pillerault went round to the creditors one after another, and asked each to empower his attorney to represent him on that occasion. Every creditor, du Tillet excepted, was sorry for Birotteau now that he had been brought low. All of them knew how he had behaved, how well his books had been kept, and how straightforward he had been in the matter. They were well pleased to find not one "gay" creditor among their number. Molineux, as agent in the first place, and afterwards as trustee, had found all that the poor man possessed, down to the print of *Hero and Leander* which Popinot had given him. Birotteau had not taken away such small matters as his gold-buckles, his pin, and the two watches, which even an honest man might not have scrupled to keep. This touching obedience to the law made a great sensation in commercial circles. Birotteau's enemies represented these things as conclusive signs of the man's stupidity;

but sensible people saw them in their true light, as a magnificent excess of honesty. In two months a change had been brought about in opinion on 'Change. The most indifferent admitted that this failure was one of the greatest curiosities of commerce ever heard of. So when the creditors knew that they were to receive sixty per cent, they agreed to do all that Pillerault asked of them. There are but few attorneys practising at the Tribunal; so several of the creditors deputed the same man to represent them, and the whole formidable assemblage was reduced to three attorneys, Ragon, the two trustees, and the registrar.

"César, you can go without fear to your meeting to-day; you will find nobody there," Pillerault said on the morning of that memorable day.

M. Ragon wished to go with his debtor. At the sound of the thin elderly voice of the previous owner of the *Queen of Roses,* all the color left his successor's face; but the kind little old man held out his arms, and Birotteau went to him like a child to his father, and both shed tears. This indulgent goodness put fresh heart into César, and he followed his uncle to the cab.

Punctually at half-past three they arrived in the Clôitre Saint-Merri, where the Tribunal of Commerce then held its sessions. The Salle des Faillites was deserted. The day and the hour had been fixed to that end with the approbation of the trustees and the registrar. The attorneys were there on behalf of their clients; there was nothing to fill César's soul with dread; and yet the poor man could not enter M. Camusot's room (which had once been his) without deep emotion, and he shuddered as he went through the Salle des Faillites.

"It is cold," said M. Camusot, turning to Birotteau; "these gentlemen will not be sorry to stay here instead of being frozen in the Salle." (He would not say the Salle des Faillites.) "Seat yourselves, gentlemen."

Every one sat down; the registrar put César, still confused, into his own armchair. Then trustees and attorneys signed their names.

"In consideration of the abandonment of your estate," said Camusot, again addressing Birotteau, "your creditors unanimously agree to forego the remainder of their claims; your *concordat* is couched in language which may soften your regrets; your attorney will have it confirmed by the Tribunal at once. So you are discharged. All the judges of the Tribunal have felt sorry that you should be placed in such a position, dear M. Birotteau, without being surprised by your courage," Camusot went on, taking Birotteau's hands, "and there is no one but appreciates your integrity. Through your disasters you have shown yourself worthy of the position which you held here. I have been in business these twenty years, and this is the second time that I have seen a merchant rise in public esteem 'after his failure.'"

Birotteau grasped the registrar's hand and squeezed it. There were tears in his eyes. Camusot asked him what he meant to do, and Birotteau answered that he was going to work, and that he intended to pay his creditors in full.

"If you should be in want of a few thousand francs to carry out your noble design you will always find them if you come to me," said Camusot; "I would give them with great pleasure to see a thing not often seen in Paris."

Pillerault, Ragon, and Birotteau left the Tribunal.

"Well, was it so bad after all?" said Pillerault, when they stood outside.

"I can see your hand in it, uncle," said César, deeply touched.

"And now that you are on your feet again, come and see my nephew," said Ragon; "it is only a step to the Rue des Cinq-Diamants."

It was with a cruel pang that César looked up and saw Constance sitting at her desk in a room on the low dark floor above the shop; dark, for a signboard outside, on which the name "A. Popinot" was painted, cut off one-third of the light from the window.

"Here is one of Alexander's lieutenants," said Birotteau, pointing to the sign with the forced mirth of misfortune.

This constrained gaiety, the naïve expression of Birotteau's old belief in his superior talents, made Ragon shudder, despite his seventy years. But César's cheerfulness broke down when his wife brought down letters for Popinot to sign, and his face turned white in spite of himself.

"Good-evening, dear," she said, smiling at him.

"I need not ask whether you are comfortable here," César said, and he looked at Popinot.

"I might be in my own son's house," she said, and her husband was struck by the tender expression which crossed her face.

Birotteau embraced Popinot, saying, "I have just lost for ever the right to call you my son."

"Let us hope," said Popinot. "*Your* Oil is going well, thanks to our efforts in the newspapers, and thanks to Gaudissart, who has been all over, and flooded France with placards and prospectuses. He is having prospectuses in German printed at Strasbourg, and is just about to descend on Germany like an invasion. We have orders for three thousand gross."

"Three thousand gross!" echoed César.

"And I have bought some land in the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, not badly; a factory is to be built there. I shall keep on at the other place in the Faubourg du Temple."

"With a little help, wife," Birotteau said in Constance's ear, "we shall pull through."

From that memorable day César and his wife and daughter understood one another. Poor clerk, as he was, he had set himself a task which, if not impossible, was gigantic; he would pay his creditors in full! The three, united by a common bond of fierce independence, grew miserly, and denied themselves everything; every farthing was consecrated to this end. Césarine, with one object in her mind, threw herself into her work with a young girl's devotion. She spent her nights in devising schemes for increasing the prosperity of the house; she invented designs for materials, and brought her inborn business faculties into play. Her employers were

obliged to check her ardor for work, and rewarded her with presents, but she declined the ornaments and trinkets which they offered; it was money that she preferred. Every month she took her salary, her little earnings, to her Uncle Pillerault, and César and Mme. Birotteau did the same. All three of them recognized their lack of ability, and shrank from assuming the responsible task of investing their savings. So the uncle went into business again, and studied the money market. At a later time it was known that Jules Desmarets and Joseph Lebas had helped him with their counsel; both had zealously looked for safe investments.

Birotteau, living in his uncle's house, did not even dare to ask any questions about the uses to which the family savings were put. He went through the streets with a bent head, shrinking from all eyes, downcast, nervous, blind to all that passed. It vexed him that he must wear fine cloth.

"At any rate, I am not eating my creditors' bread," he said, with an angelic glance at the kind old man. "Your bread is sweet" (he went on), "although you give it me out of pity, when I think that, thanks to this sacred charity, I am not robbing my creditors of my earnings."

The merchants who met the Birotteau of those days could not see a trace of the Birotteau whom they used to know. Vast thoughts were awakened in indifferent beholders at sight of that face so dark with the blackest misery, of the man who had never been thoughtful so bowed down beneath the weight of a thought; it was a revelation of the depths, in that this being, dwelling on so ordinary a human level, could have had so far to fall. To the man who would fain be wiped out comes no extinction. Shallow natures who lack a conscience, and are incapable of much feeling, can never furnish forth the tragedy of man and fate. Religion alone sets its peculiar seal on those who have sounded these depths; they believe in a future and in a Providence; a certain light shines in them, a look of holy resignation, blended with hope, which touches those who behold it; they know all that they have lost, like the exiled angel weeping at the gates of Heaven.

A bankrupt cannot show his face on 'Change; and César, thrust out from the society of honest men, was like the angel sighing for pardon.

For fourteen months César refused all amusements; his mind was full of religious thoughts, inspired by his fall. Sure though he was of the Ragons' friendship, it was impossible to induce him to dine with them; nor would he visit the Lebas, nor the Matifats, the Protez and Chiffrevilles, nor even M. Vauquelin, though all were anxious to show their admiration for César's behavior. He would rather be alone in his own room, where he could not meet the eyes of any one to whom he owed money; and the most cordial kindness on the part of his friends recalled him to a sense of the bitterness of his position.

Constance and Césarine went nowhere. On Sundays and holidays, the only times when they were free, the two women went first to Mass, and then home with César after the service. Pillerault used to ask the Abbé Loraux to come—the Abbé Loraux who had sustained César in his trouble—and they made a family party. The old ironmonger could not but approve his nephew's scruples, his own sense of commercial honor was too keen; and therefore his mind was bent upon increasing the number of people whom the bankrupt might look in the face with a clear brow.

In May 1821 the efforts of the family thus struggling with adversity were rewarded by a holiday, contrived by the arbiter of their destinies. The first Sunday in that month was the anniversary of the betrothal of César and Constance. Pillerault and the Ragons had taken a little house in the country at Sceaux, and the old ironmonger wanted to make a festival of the house-warming.

On the Saturday evening he spoke to his nephew. "We are going into the country to-morrow, César," he said, "and you must come too."

César, who wrote a beautiful hand, copied documents for Derville and several other lawyers in the evenings, and on Sundays (with a dispensation from the curé) he worked like a negro.

"No," he answered; "M. Derville is waiting for an account of a guardianship."

"Your wife and daughter deserve a holiday, and there will be no one but our friends—the Abbé Loraux, the Ragons, and Popinot and his uncle. Besides, I want you to come."

César and his wife, carried away by the daily round of their busy lives, had never gone back to Sceaux, though from time to time they both had wished to see the garden again, and the lime-tree beneath which César had almost swooned with joy, in the days when he was still an assistant at the *Queen of Roses*. To-day, when Popinot drove them, and Birotteau sat with Constance and their daughter, his wife's eyes turned to his from time to time, but the look of intelligence in them drew no answering smile from his lips. She whispered a few words in his ear, but a shake of the head was the only response. The sweet expressions of tenderness, unalterable, but now forced somewhat, brought no light into César's eyes; his face grew gloomier, the tears which he had kept back began to fill his eyes. Twenty years ago he had been along this very road, when he was young and prosperous and full of hope, the lover of a girl as lovely as Césarine, who was with them now. Then he had dreamed of happiness to come; to-day he saw his noble child's face, pale with long hours of work, and his brave wife, of whose great beauty there remained such traces as are left to a beautiful city after the lava flood has poured over it. Of all that had been, love alone was left. César's attitude repressed the joy in the girl's heart and in Anselme, the two who now represented the lovers of that bygone day.

"Be happy, children; you deserve to be happy," said the poor father, in heartrending tones. "You can love each other with no after-thoughts," added he; and as he spoke, he took both his wife's hands in his and kissed them with a reverent, admiring affection which touched her more than the brightest cheerfulness. Pillerault, the Ragons, the Abbé Loraux, and Popinot the elder were all waiting for them at the house; there was an understanding among those five kindly souls,

and their manner, and looks, and words put César at his ease, for it went to their hearts to see him always as if on the morrow of his failure.

"Take a walk in the Bois d'Aulnay," said Pillerault, putting César's hand into his wife's hand. "Go and take Anselme and Césarine with you, and come back again at four o'clock."

"Poor things, we are in the way," said Mme. Ragon, touched by her debtor's unfeigned misery; "he will be very happy before long."

"It is a repentance without the sin," said the Abbé Loraux.

"He could only have grown great through misfortune," said the judge.

The power of forgetting is the great secret of strong and creative natures; they forget after the manner of nature, who knows nothing of a past; with every hour she begins afresh the constant mysterious workings of fertility. But weak natures, like Birotteau, take their sorrows into their lives instead of transmuting them into the axioms of experience; and, steeping themselves in their troubles, wear themselves out by reverting daily to the old unhappiness.

When the two couples had found the footpath which leads to the Bois d'Aulnay, set like a crown on one of the loveliest of the low hills about Paris; when the Vallée-aux-Loups lay below them in its enchanting beauty, the bright day, the charm of the view, the fresh green leaves about them, and delicious memories of that fairest day of their youth, relaxed the chords which grief had strung to resonance in César's soul; he held his wife's arm tightly against his beating heart; his eyes were glazed no longer, a glad light shone in them.

"At last I see you again, my dear César," Constance said. "It seems to me that we are behaving well enough to allow ourselves a little pleasure from time to time."

"How can I?" poor Birotteau answered. "Oh! Constance, your love is the one good left to me. I have lost everything, even the confidence that I used to have in myself. I have no heart left in me; I want to live long enough to pay my

dues on earth before I die, and that is all. You, dear, who have been wisdom and prudence for me, who saw things clearly, you who are not to blame, may be glad. Among us three, I am the only guilty one. Eighteen months ago, at that unlucky ball, I saw this Constance of mine, the only woman whom I have loved, more beautiful perhaps than the young girl with whom I wandered along this path twenty years ago, as our children are wandering together now. . . . In less than two years I have blighted that beauty, my pride, and I had a right to be proud of it. I love you more as I know you better. . . . Oh! dearest!" and his tone gave the word an eloquence that went to his wife's heart, "if only I might hear you scold me, instead of soothing my distress."

"I did not think it possible," she said, "that a woman could love her husband more after twenty years of life together."

For a moment César forgot all his troubles at the words that brought such a wealth of happiness to a heart like his. It was with something like joy in his soul that he went towards *their* tree, which by some chance had not been cut down. Husband and wife sat down beneath it and watched Anselme and Césarine, who walked to and fro, on the same plot of grass, unconscious of their movements, fancying perhaps that they were still walking on and on.

"Mademoiselle," Anselme was saying, "do you think me so base and so greedy as to take advantage of the fact that I own your father's interest in the Cephalic Oil? I have carefully set aside his share of the profits; I am keeping them for him. I am adding interest to the money; if there are any doubtful debts, I pass them to my own account. We can only belong to each other when your father has been rehabilitated: I am trying with all the strength that love gives me to bring that day soon."

He had carefully kept his secret from Césarine's mother; but the simplest lover is always anxious to be great in his love's eyes.

"And will it come soon?" she asked.

"Very soon," said Popinot.

The tone in which the answer was given was so penetrating, that the innocent and pure-hearted girl held up her forehead for her lover's kiss, fervent and respectful, for Césarine's noble nature had spoken so plainly in the impulse.

"Everything is going well, papa," she said, with the air of one who knows a great deal. "Be nice, and talk, and don't look so sad any longer."

When these four people, so closely bound together, returned to Pillerault's new house, César, unobservant though he was, felt from the Ragons' altered manner that something was impending. Mme. Ragon was peculiarly gracious; her look and tone said plainly to César, "We are paid."

After dinner the notary of Sceaux appeared. Pillerault asked him to be seated, and glanced at Birotteau, who began to suspect some surprise, though he did not imagine how great it would be. Pillerault began:

"Your savings for eighteen months, nephew, and those of your wife and daughter amount to twenty thousand francs. I received thirty thousand francs in the shape of dividend, so we have fifty thousand francs to divide among your creditors. M. Ragon has received thirty thousand francs as dividend; so this gentleman, who is the notary of Sceaux, is about to hand you a receipt in full for principal and interest, paid to your friends. The rest of the money is with Crottat for Lourdois, old Mme. Madou, the builder, and the carpenter, and the more pressing of your creditors. Next year we shall see. One can go a long way with time and patience."

Birotteau's joy cannot be described; he embraced his uncle, and shed tears.

"Let him wear his Cross to-day," said Ragon, addressing the Abbé Loraux, and the confessor fastened the red ribbon to César's buttonhole. A score of times that evening he looked at himself in the mirrors on the walls of the sitting-room with a delight which people who believe themselves to be superior would laugh at; but these good-hearted citizens saw nothing

unnatural in it. The next day Birotteau went to see Mme. Madou.

"Oh! is that you!" she cried; "I did not know you, old man, you have grown so gray. Still, the like of you don't come to grief; there are places under Government for you. I myself am working as hard as a poodle that turns a spit, and deserves to be christened."

"But, madame——"

"Oh, I'm not blaming you," she said; "you had your discharge."

"I have come to tell you that I will pay you the balance to-day, at Maître Crottat's office, and interest also——"

"Really?"

"You must be there at half-past eleven."

"There's honesty for you! good measure, and thirteen to the dozen," cried she, in outspoken admiration. "Stop, sir, I do a good trade with that red-haired youngster of yours; he is a nice young fellow; he lets me make my profit without haggling over the price, so as to make up to me for the loss. Well, then, I will give you the receipt; keep your money, poor old soul! La Madou fires up like tinder, she hollers out, but she has something here," and she tapped the most ample cushion of live flesh ever known in the Great Market.

"Never!" said Birotteau, "the law is explicit; I mean to pay you in full."

"Then there is no need to keep on begging and praying of me. And to-morrow at the Market I will sound your praises; they shall all know about you. Oh! it is a rare joke!"

The worthy man went through the same scene again with the house-painter, Crottat's father-in-law, but with some variations. It was raining. César left his umbrella in a corner by the door, and the well-to-do house painter, sitting at breakfast with his wife in a handsomely furnished room, saw the stream of water trickle across the floor, and was not too considerate.

"Hallo, poor old Birotteau, what do you want?" he asked, in the hard tone which people use to a tiresome beggar.

"Has not your son-in-law asked you, sir——"

"What?" Lourdois broke in impatiently. Some request was to follow, he thought.

"To go to his office this morning at half-past eleven, to give me a receipt in full for the balance of your claim."

"Oh! that is another thing! Just sit you down, M. Birotteau, and take a bite with us——"

"Do us the honor of breakfasting with us," said Mme. Lourdois.

"Doing pretty well?" asked her burly spouse.

"No, sir. I have had to lunch off a roll in my office to get some money together, but I hope in time to repair the wrong done to my neighbors."

"Really, you are a man of honor," remarked the house-painter, as he swallowed a mouthful of bread and butter and Strasbourg pie.

"And what is Mme. Birotteau doing?" asked Mme. Lourdois.

"She is keeping the books in M. Anselme Popinot's counting-house."

"Poor things!" said Mme. Lourdois, in a low voice.

"If you should want me, come and see me, my dear M. Birotteau," began Lourdois; "I might be of use——"

"I want you at eleven o'clock, sir," said Birotteau, and with that he went.

This first result gave Birotteau fresh courage, but it did not give him peace of mind. The desire to redeem his character perturbed him beyond all measure. He completely lost the bloom which used to appear in his face, his eyes grew dull, his cheeks hollow. Old acquaintances who met him at eight o'clock in the morning, or after four in the afternoon on his way to and from the Rue de l'Oratoire, saw a pale-faced, nervous, white-haired man, wearing the same overcoat which he had had at the time of the bankruptcy (for he was as careful of it as a poor sub-lieutenant who economizes his uniform). Sometimes they would stop him in spite of himself, for he was quick-sighted, slinking home, keeping close to the wall like a thief.

"People know how you have behaved, my friend," they would say. "Everybody is sorry to see how hardly you live, you and your wife and daughter."

"Take a little more time about it," others would suggest. "A wound in the purse is not mortal."

"No, but a wound in the soul is deadly indeed," the poor feeble César said one day in answer to Matifat.

At the beginning of the year 1823 the Canal Saint-Martin was decided upon, and land in the Faubourg du Temple fetched fabulous prices. The canal would actually pass through the property once César's, now du Tillet's. The company who had purchased the concession were prepared to pay du Tillet an exorbitant sum for the land if he would put them in possession within a given time, and Popinot's lease was the one obstacle in the way. So du Tillet went to see the druggist in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants.

If Popinot himself regarded du Tillet with indifference, as Césarine's lover he felt an instinctive hatred of the man. He knew nothing of the theft, nor of the disgraceful machinations of the lucky banker, but a voice within him said, "This is a thief who goes unpunished." Popinot had not had the slightest transaction with du Tillet, whose presence was hateful to him, and particularly hateful at that moment when he beheld du Tillet enriched with the spoils of his employer's property, for the building-land at the Madeleine was beginning to command prices which presaged the exorbitant sums which were asked for them in 1827. So when the banker explained the reason of his visit, Popinot looked at him with concentrated indignation.

"I do not mean to refuse outright to surrender my lease, but I must have sixty thousand francs for it, and I will not bate a farthing."

"Sixty thousand francs!" cried du Tillet, making as though he would go.

"The lease has fifteen years to run, and it will take another three thousand francs per annum to replace the factory.

So, sixty thousand francs, or we will say no more about it," said Popinot, turning into the shop, whither du Tillet followed him.

The discussion waxed warm, when Mme. Birotteau, hearing her husband's name pronounced, came downstairs, and saw du Tillet for the first time since the famous ball. He, on his side, could not avoid making a startled gesture at the sight of the change wrought in her face; he was frightened at his work, and lowered his eyes.

"This gentleman is receiving three hundred thousand francs for *your* land," said Popinot, addressing Mme. César, "and he declines to pay *us* sixty thousand francs by way of indemnity for *our* lease——"

"Three thousand francs per annum," said du Tillet, laying stress on the words.

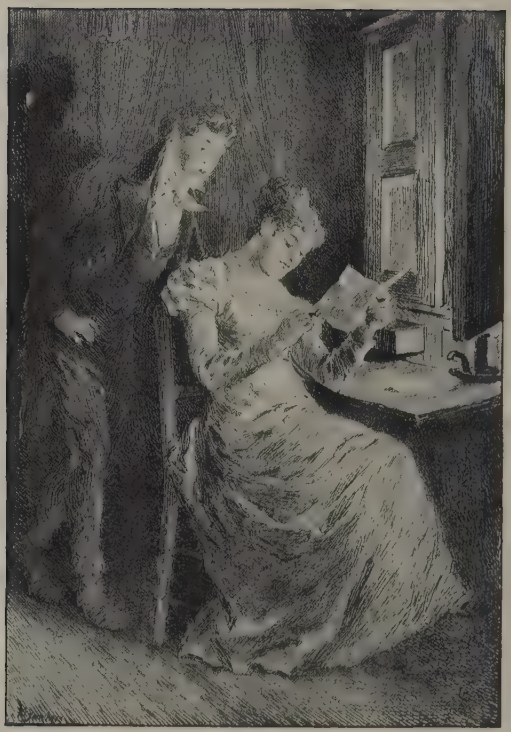
"*Three thousand francs!*" Madame César repeated the words quietly and significantly.

Du Tillet turned pale; Popinot looked at Mme. Birotteau. There was a pause and a deep silence, which made the scene still more inexplicable to Anselme.

"Sign your surrender," said du Tillet; "I have had the document drafted by Crottat," and he drew a stamped agreement from a side-pocket. "I will give you a draft on the Bank for sixty thousand francs."

Popinot stared at Mme. César with great and unfeigned astonishment; he thought that he was dreaming. While du Tillet was making out his draft at a desk, Mme. César vanished upstairs again. The druggist and the banker exchanged papers, and du Tillet went out with a frigid bow to Popinot.

"At last!" cried Popinot. "Only a few months now, and I shall have my Césarine, thanks to this queer business," and he watched du Tillet turn into the Rue des Lombards, where his cab was waiting for him. "My dear little wife shall not wear herself to death at her work. What! was a look from Mme. César enough? What is there between her and that brigand? It is a very extraordinary thing."



Great was his astonishment to find his mother-in-law reading a letter from Du Tillet

[illegible] the draft [illegible] the Bank, and [illegible] up to [illegible] Birotteau [illegible] in the [illegible] she [illegible] Anselme and [illegible] like a [illegible] when these [illegible] so he [illegible] in all the [illegible] in a lover [illegible] happiness within his grasp.

[illegible] his [illegible] surprised by [illegible] reading a letter from du Tillet, for [illegible] handwriting at once. The sight of a [illegible] scraps of burnt paper on the [illegible] Popinot, [illegible] it, angel of my life, and why——"

"[illegible] such a bargain as [illegible]?" he asked, [illegible] repressed suspicion.

"Let us not talk of it," she said, and he saw that she was painfully agitated.

"Yes," answered Popinot, quite taken aback, "we must talk of the end of your troubles." [illegible] behave like a man of honor?"

"What is it, my boy?" the poor woman asked.

"[illegible] two hundred and [illegible] and the half of [illegible] hundred and [illegible] and twenty-one," said Popinot [illegible] thousand francs [illegible] M. Birotteau, [illegible] just paid [illegible] francs."

[illegible] César [illegible] excitement, [illegible] could hear the beating of [illegible]

Great was his astonishment to find his mother-in-law reading a letter from Du Tillet

Popinot sent the draft to be cashed at the Bank, and went up to speak to Mme. Birotteau; but she was not in the counting-house, doubtless she had gone to her room. Anselme and Constance lived like a mother-in-law and son-in-law when these are on good terms with each other, so he went to Constance's room in all the haste natural in a lover who sees happiness within his grasp.

Great was his astonishment to find his mother-in-law (whom he surprised by springing into the room) reading a letter from du Tillet, for Anselme recognized the handwriting at once. The sight of a lighted candle and black phantom scraps of burnt paper on the floor sent a shudder through Popinot, whose long-sighted eyes had involuntarily read the words with which the letter began, "I adore you! You know it, angel of my life, and why——"

"What hold have you on du Tillet to make him conclude such a bargain as this?" he asked, with the jerky laugh of repressed suspicion.

"Let us not talk of it," she said, and he saw that she was painfully agitated.

"Yes," answered Popinot, quite taken aback, "we must talk of the end of your troubles." Anselme swung round on his heels and drummed on the window-pane, staring out into the yard. "Very well," said he to himself, "and suppose that she loved du Tillet, is that any reason why I should not behave like a man of honor?"

"What is it, my boy?" the poor woman asked.

"The net profits on the Cephalic Oil amount to two hundred and forty-two thousand francs, and the half of two hundred and forty-two is one hundred and twenty-one," said Popinot abruptly. "If I deduct from that sum the forty-eight thousand francs already paid to M. Birotteau, there still remain seventy-three thousand; add to it the sixty thousand just paid for the surrender of the lease, and *you* will have one hundred and thirty-three thousand francs."

Mme. César listened in such glad excitement, that Popinot could hear the beating of her heart.

"Well, I have always looked on M. Birotteau as my partner," he continued; "we can employ the money in repaying his creditors. Your savings, twenty-eight thousand francs, in Uncle Pillerault's keeping, will raise the sum to a hundred and sixty-one thousand francs. Uncle will not refuse to give us a receipt for his twenty-five thousand francs. No power on earth can prevent my lending to my father-in-law, on account of next year's profits, enough to pay off the remainder of his creditors. . . . And—he will—be—rehabilitated——"

"Rehabilitated!" cried Mme. César, kneeling before her chair, and, clasping her hands, she repeated a prayer. The letter had slipped from her fingers. She crossed herself. "Dear Anselme!" she said, "dear boy!" She took his face in her hands, kissed him on the forehead, and held him tightly in her arms. "Césarine is yours indeed," she cried. "My daughter will be very happy. She will leave the house where she is working herself to death."

"Through love," said Anselme.

"Yes," smiled the mother.

"Listen to a little secret," said Anselme, looking out of the corner of his eye at the unlucky letter. "I obliged Célestin when he wanted capital to buy your business, but it was on one condition. Your rooms are just as you left them. I had my own idea, but I did not think then that fortune would favor us so greatly. Célestin has undertaken to sublet your old rooms to you; he has not set foot in them, and all the furniture there is yours. I am reserving the second story, so that Césarine and I may live there; she shall never leave you. After we are married, I will spend the day here from eight o'clock in the morning till six in the evening. Then I will buy out M. César's interest in the business for a hundred thousand francs, so that, with his post, you will have ten thousand livres a year. Will you not be happy?"

"Do not say any more, Anselme, or I shall go mad with joy."

Mme. César's angelic bearing, her pure eyes, the innocence

on her fair brow, gave the lie so magnificently to the countless thoughts which surged up in the young lover's brain, that he made up his mind to slay the chimeras of his fancy. The sin was irreconcilable with the life and the sentiments of Pillerault's niece.

"My dear adored mother," he began, "a horrible doubt has just crossed my mind. If you would see me happy, you will set it at rest."

Popinot held out his hand as he spoke, and took possession of the letter.

"Unintentionally I read the first words in du Tillet's handwriting," he said, alarmed at the consternation in her face. "The words coincide so oddly with the effect you just produced upon the man, who complied at once with my extravagant demands, that anybody would find the explanation which the devil suggests to me in spite of myself. A glance from you, and three words were enough——"

"Stop," said Mme. César, and taking back the letter, she burned it under Anselme's eyes. "I am cruelly punished for a trifling fault, my child. And now you must know all, Anselme. The suspicion attaching to the mother must not do her daughter an injury, and besides, I may speak without a blush; I could tell my husband this that I am about to tell you. Du Tillet tried to seduce me, my husband was warned at once, and Du Tillet was to be dismissed. The very day that my husband was to discharge him du Tillet took three thousand francs."

"I suspected it," said Popinot, with all his hatred of the man in his tone.

"Anselme, your future and your happiness required this confidence, but it must die in your own breast, as it had died in César's and mine. You surely remember the fuss my husband made about the mistake in the books. M. Birotteau, no doubt, put three thousand francs into the safe (the price of the shawl, which was not given to me for three years), so as to avoid ruining the young man by bringing him into a police court. So there you have the explanation of my cry of surprise. Alas, my dear boy, I will confess my childish

conduct. Du Tillet had written three love letters to me, letters which showed his nature so plainly that I kept them—as a curiosity. I only read them once; but, after all, it was not wise to keep them. When I saw du Tillet, I thought of them, and went up to my room to burn them. When you came in, I was looking at the last one. That is all, my dear."

Anselme knelt and kissed Mme. César's hand. The expression in his eyes drew tears of admiring affection from hers. Constance raised her son-in-law, and clasped him to her heart.

That day was destined to be a day of joy for César. The King's private secretary, M. de Vandenesse, came to the office to speak with him. They went out together into the little courtyard of the Sinking-Fund Department.

"M. Birotteau," said the Vicomte, "the story of your struggle to pay your creditors came by chance to the King's knowledge. His Majesty was touched by such unusual conduct; and learning that, from motives of humility, you were not wearing the Order of the Legion of Honor, has sent me to command you to resume it. His Majesty also wishes to assist you to discharge your obligations, and has ordered me to pay this amount to you out of his own privy purse, with regrets that he can do no more for you. Let the matter remain a profound secret, for His Majesty thinks it little becomes a King to make official proclamation of his good actions," and the private secretary paid over six thousand francs to the employé, who heard these words with indescribable emotions.

Birotteau could only stammer inarticulate thanks. Vandenesse smiled, and waved his hand. César's principles are so rarely seen in practice in Paris, that by degrees his life had won admiration. Joseph Lebas, Popinot the elder, Camusot, Ragon, the Abbé Loraux, the head partner of the firm which employed Césarine, Lourdois, and M. de la Billardière had spoken of it. The scale of opinion had already turned in his favor, and people praised him to the skies.

"There goes a man of honor!" The words had reached César's ears several times in the street; he heard them with the sensations of an author who hears his name pronounced. This fair renown disgusted du Tillet. César's first thought on receiving the King's banknotes was of repayment to his ex-assistant. The good man betook himself to the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin, and it so fell out that the banker, returning home from business, met him upon the staircase.

"Well, my poor Birotteau," said he, in a caressing tone.

"Poor?" the other cried proudly. "I am very rich. I shall lay my head on the pillow to-night with the satisfaction of knowing that I have paid you."

The words, so full of honesty, put du Tillet for a moment on the rack. Every one respected him, but he had lost his self-respect; a voice which could not be stifled cried within him, "This man is heroic!" But he spoke:

"Pay me! What business can you be in?"

Birotteau felt quite sure that du Tillet would not repeat the story.

"I shall never start in business again, sir. No human power could foresee the thing that befell me. Who knows but that I might be the victim of another Roguin? But my conduct has been put before the King, his heart has deigned to compassionate my struggles, and he has encouraged them by sending me at once a fairly large sum, which——"

"Do you want a receipt in full?" du Tillet cut him short. "Are you paying——"

"In full, and interest besides. So I must beg you to come to M. Crottat's office, a step or two away."

"In the presence of a notary!"

"Why, sir, there is nothing to prevent me from thinking of my rehabilitation, and a document so authenticated is legal evidence——"

"Come, let us go," said du Tillet, and he went out with Birotteau; "it is only a step. But who will find you so much money?" he went on.

"No one finds it for me," said César. "I am earning it by the sweat of my brow."

"You owe an enormous amount to Claparon."

"Alas! yes, that is the heaviest of my debts; I am afraid the effort will be too much for me."

"Oh! you will never be able to pay it all," said du Tillet harshly.

"He is right," thought Birotteau.

He went home again by way of the Rue Saint-Honoré, a piece of inadvertence, for he always went round some other way, that he might not see his shop, nor the windows of his old home. For the first time since his fall, he saw the house where he had spent eighteen happy years, and three months of anguish that effaced those memories.

"I used to count on ending my days there," he said to himself; and he quickened his pace at the sight of a new name on the shop front:

CÉLESTIN CREVEL

Late César Birotteau.

"My eyes dazzle. . . . Is that Césarine?" he cried, thinking that he had seen a golden head at the window.

It was really Césarine whom he saw, and his wife was there, and so was Popinot. The two lovers knew that Birotteau never went past his old home; and it was impossible that they should imagine the great event in the Rue de l'Oratoire, so they had gone to make arrangements for the fête they were planning to give in Birotteau's honor. The strange apparition astonished César so much that he stood stockstill.

"There is M. Birotteau looking at his old house," said M. Molineux to a shopkeeper who lived over against the *Queen of Roses*.

"Poor man!" returned Birotteau's old neighbor, "he gave one of the grandest balls there—there were two hundred carriages in the street."

"I went to it; he went bankrupt three months afterwards, and I was trustee," said Molineux.

Birotteau fled, his legs trembling beneath him, and reached Pillerault's house.

Pillerault knew what was passing in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants, and it seemed to him that his nephew was scarcely fit to bear the shock of a joy so great as his rehabilitation. He had been a daily witness of César's mental sufferings, knew that Birotteau's own stern doctrine as to bankrupts was always in his thoughts, and that he was living up to the very limit of his strength. Dead honor might have its Easter Day for him; and it was this hope that gave him no respite from pain. Pillerault undertook to prepare César for the good news; so when he came in, his uncle was thinking how to attain his end. César began to tell the news of the interest that the King had taken in him, his joy seemed to Pillerault to be auspicious, and his amazement that Césarine should be at the window at the sign of the *Queen of Roses* afforded an excellent opening.

"Well, César," Pillerault began, "do you know what brought it about? Popinot is impatient to marry Césarine. He will not and ought not to be bound any longer by your extravagant ideas of honor, to spend his youth in eating dry bread and smelling a good dinner. Popinot is determined to pay off your creditors in full."

"He is going to buy his wife."

"Isn't it to his credit that he wants to rehabilitate his father-in-law?"

"But questions might be raised, and besides——"

"And besides," cried Uncle Pillerault in feigned anger, "you may sacrifice yourself if you like, but you have no right to sacrifice your daughter."

A lively discussion began, and Pillerault worked himself up.

"Eh! If Popinot lent you nothing," cried he; "if he had looked upon you as his partner; if he chose to consider the money that he paid over to your creditors for your interest in the Oil as an advance on account of the profits, so that you should not be robbed——"

"It would look as though I had arranged with him to cheat my creditors."

Pillerault pretended to be defeated by this logic. He knew enough of human nature to guess that during the night the good man would argue out the case with himself; and those private reflections of his would accustom him to the idea of rehabilitation.

"But how came my wife and daughter to be in our old house?" he asked at dinner.

"Anselme means to take one of the floors, and he and Césarine will set up housekeeping there. Your wife is on his side. They have had the banns put up without telling you, so as to compel you to give your consent. Popinot says that there will be less merit in marrying Césarine after you are rehabilitated. You accept the King's six thousand francs, and yet you will take nothing from your relatives! Now, for my own part, I am quite justified in giving you a receipt in full; would you refuse it?"

"No," said César. "But it would not hinder me from saving the money to pay you, receipt or no."

"All this is splitting hairs," said Pillerault, "and when honesty is in question, I ought to be allowed to know what is right. What folly were you talking just now? When your creditors are all paid in full, will you still persist that you have cheated them?"

César looked full at Pillerault as he spoke, and it touched the older man to see a bright smile on his nephew's face after three years of dejection.

"You are right," he said, "they would be paid.—But it is like selling my daughter!"

"And I wish to be bought," cried Césarine, who came in with Popinot.

The lovers stealing on tiptoe through the lobby had overheard the words. Mme. Birotteau was just behind them. The three had made a round in a cab, asking all the creditors to meet in Crottat's office that evening; Popinot's lover's logic bore down César's scruples; but he still persisted in calling

himself a debtor, and would have it that he was outflanking the law by a substitution. Conscience yielded to an outburst from Popinot:

"So you mean to kill your daughter, do you?"

"Kill my daughter!" echoed César, bewildered.

"Well, now," said Popinot, "what is there to prevent me from making a deed of gift in your favor of a sum which on my conscience I believe to be yours? Can you refuse?"

"No," said César.

"Good. Then let us go to Alexandre Crottat this evening, so that there shall be no going back upon it, and our marriage contract can be decided at the same time."

An application for reinstatement and all the necessary certificates were duly deposited by Derville at the office of the Procureur-Général of the Court of Appeal.

During the month which elapsed between the putting up of the banns and the marriage, and during the progress of the formalities, César lived in a state of constant nervous excitement. He was ill at ease. He feared that he might not live to see the great day when his disabilities should be formally removed. His pulse throbbed unaccountably, he said, and he complained of a dull pain about his heart. He had been exhausted by painful emotion, and this supreme joy was wearing him out. Decrees of rehabilitation are rare in Paris; there is scarcely one in ten years.

There is something indescribably solemn and imposing in the ceremony of justice for those who take society seriously. An institution is to men as they consider it, and is invested with dignity and grandeur by their thoughts. When a nation has ceased, not to feel the religious instinct, but to believe; when primary education relaxes the bonds of union by teaching children a habit of merciless analysis, a nation is dissolved; for the only ties that are left to bind men together and make of them one body are the ignoble ties of material interest, and the dictates of the selfish cult created by egoism well carried out. Birotteau, sustained by religion, saw Justice as Justice ought to be regarded among men, as the expression

of society itself; beneath the forms he saw the sovereign will, the laws by which men have agreed to live. If the magistrate is old, feeble, and white-haired, so much the more solemn does his priestly office appear, an office which demands so profound a study of human nature and of things, an office to which the heart is immolated, for of necessity it becomes callous in a guardian of so many palpitating interests.

In these days the men who cannot ascend the staircase of the Court of Appeal in the old Palais de Justice in Paris, without feeling deeply stirred, are growing rare; but Birotteau was one of these men. There are not many who notice the majestic grandeur of that staircase, so magnificently planned to produce an effect. It rises at the further end of the peristyle which adorns the Cour du Palais. The doorway opens on the centre of the gallery which leads from the vast Salle des Pas Perdus at its one end to the Sainte-Chapelle at the other, two monuments which may well dwarf everything about them into insignificance. The Church of St. Louis is in itself one of the grandest buildings in Paris, and there is an indescribable dim atmosphere of romance about it when approached by way of this gallery; while the vast Salle des Pas Perdus is flooded with daylight, and it is hard to forget the memories of the history of France that cling about its walls. So the staircase must have a grandeur of its own if it is not utterly overshadowed by the glories of those two famous buildings. Perhaps there is something to stir the soul at the sight of the place where decrees are executed, beheld through the rich scroll-work of the screen of the Palais. The staircase gives entrance to a vast room, the Salle des Pas Perdus of this court, beyond which lies the Hall of Audience. Imagine the feeling with which Birotteau (always so much impressed by the circumstance of justice) mounted the staircase among a little crowd of his friends—Lebas, at that time President of the Tribunal of Commerce; Camusot, who had acted as registrar; Ragon, his old master; and the Abbé Loraux, his confessor. The presence of the good priest enhanced these earthly honors by a reflection from heaven, which gave them yet more value in César's eyes.

Pillerault, that practical philosopher, had bethought him of the expedient of dwelling upon and exaggerating the joy of the release, so that the actual experience might not overwhelm César. Just as he finished dressing, he found himself surrounded by faithful friends, all anxious for the honor of accompanying him to the bar of the Court. The delight which suffused the good man's soul at the sight of this group raised him to a pitch of happiness necessary for him if he was to endure the alarming ordeal. He found others of his friends standing in the Great Hall of Audience, where a dozen Councillors were sitting.

After the cases had been called, Birotteau's attorney made application in a brief formula. At a sign from the President, the Attorney-General rose to give his opinion. In the name of the Court, the Attorney-General, the public accuser, was about to make demand that the merchant's honor, which had been pledged, should be vindicated; a proceeding unique in law, for a condemned man can only be pardoned. Those who have hearts that feel can imagine Birotteau's feelings when M. de Granville spoke somewhat as follows:

"Gentlemen," said the great lawyer, "on the 16th of January 1820, Birotteau was declared a bankrupt by the Tribunal of Commerce of the Seine. The insolvency was not occasioned by imprudence on the part of the merchant, nor by dishonest speculation, nor any other cause which could stain his honor. We feel that it is necessary to state it publicly—the calamity was brought about by one of those disasters which occur from time to time, to the great affliction of Justice and of the city of Paris. It was reserved for this present century, in which the evil leaven of subverted morals and revolutionary ideas will long ferment, to behold the Parisian notariat depart from the honorable traditions of its past; there have been more cases of insolvency in that body during the last few years than in two preceding centuries under the ancient monarchy. The greed of gold rapidly acquired has seized upon officials, those guardians of the public welfare and intermediary authorities."

Then followed a tirade based on this text, in the course of which M. le Comte de Granville (speaking in character) took occasion to incriminate Liberals, Bonapartists, and all and sundry who were disaffected, as in duty bound. Events have shown that there was good ground for the Councillor's apprehensions.

"The immediate cause of the plaintiff's ruin was the action of a Paris notary, who absconded with the money which Birotteau deposited with him. The sentence passed by the Court in Roguin's case shows how shamefully he had betrayed his client's trust. A *concordat* followed. We will observe, for the honor of the applicant, that the proceedings were characterized by honesty not to be met with in the scandalous failures which daily occur in Paris. Birotteau's creditors, gentlemen, found every trifle that he possessed, down to trinkets and articles of wearing apparel belonging not only to him, but to his wife, who, to swell the assets, gave up all that she had. Birotteau at this juncture showed himself worthy of the respect which he had won by the discharge of his municipal functions; for he was at that time deputy-mayor of the second arrondissement, and had just received the Cross of the Legion of Honor accorded to the devoted Royalist, who shed his blood for the cause on the steps of Saint-Roch in Vendémiaire; and, no less, to the Consular judge, who had won respect by his ability, and popularity by his conciliatory spirit; to the modest municipal officer, who declined the honors of the mayoralty for himself, and put forward the name of another as more worthy—the honorable Baron de la Billardière, one of the noble Vendeans whom he had learned to esteem in evil days."

"He put that better than I did," said César in his uncle's ear.

"The creditors, therefore, receiving sixty per cent of their claims, thanks to the upright merchant and his wife and daughter, who surrendered everything that they possessed, gave expression to their respect in the *concordat,* by which they forewent the remainder of their claims in consideration

of the dividend. The attention of the Court is called to the manner in which this record is worded."—Here the Attorney-General read the *concordat*—"After such expressions of good-will, gentlemen, many a trader would have considered himself free, and would have walked with head erect in public; but so far from considering his liabilities to be discharged, Birotteau would not give way to despair, but made an inward resolution to hasten the coming of a glorious day which here and now dawns for him. Nothing turned him aside from his purpose. Our beloved sovereign gave a post to the man who was wounded at Saint-Roch, and the bankrupt merchant set by the whole of his salary for the benefit of his creditors, for the devotion of his family did not fail him——"

Tears came into Birotteau's eyes as he squeezed his uncle's hand.

"His wife and daughter poured their earnings into the common treasury; they too had embraced Birotteau's loyal purpose. They descended from their position to take a subordinate place. Such sacrifices as these, gentlemen, deserve all honor, for they are the hardest of all. This was the task which Birotteau laid upon himself."

The Attorney read an abbreviated version of the schedule, giving the names of the creditors and the balances due to them.

"Every one of these amounts, gentlemen, has been paid (interest included). The receipts have not been given by notes of hand which demand investigation, but by certificates of payment made in the presence of a notary, documents which do not abuse the good faith of the Court, though, nevertheless, the inquiries required by the law have been duly made. You, therefore, restore to Birotteau not his honor, but the civil and political privileges of which he has been deprived, and in so doing you do justice. Such cases come so seldom before you, that we cannot refrain from giving expression to our admiration of the conduct of the applicant, who has already received the encouragement of august patronage."

With that, he read the formal application. The Court de-

liberated without retiring, and the President rose to pronounce the decree.

"The Court charges me to inform M. Birotteau of the satisfaction with which the decree, granted under such circumstances, is passed.—Call the next case."

Birotteau, already invested with a caftan of honor by the Attorney-General's speech, was struck dumb with joy when he heard these solemn words from the President of the Highest Court of Appeal in France, words which made those who heard them feel that the impassive Themis had a heart. He could not move from his place, he seemed to be glued to the floor, and gazed with bewildered eyes at the Councillors, who seemed to him like angels who had opened the gates which admitted him to life among his fellows. His uncle took him by the arm and drew him away. Then César, who had not obeyed the desire of Louis XVIII., fastened the red ribbon at his buttonhole, like a man in a dream, and went down in triumph with his friends about him to the hackney cab.

"Where are you taking me?" he asked of Joseph Lebas, Pillerault, and Ragon.

"Home."

"No. It is three o'clock; I want to go on 'Change again, now that I have the right."

"To the Exchange," Pillerault gave the order, and looked significantly at Lebas, for there were symptoms which made him uneasy; he feared for Birotteau's reason.

So Birotteau went back on 'Change between his uncle and Joseph Lebas; the two merchants whom every one respected linked their arms in his. The news of his rehabilitation was abroad. Du Tillet was the first to see the three and old Ragon, who followed behind.

"Ah! my dear master! Delighted to hear that you have pulled through your difficulties. Perhaps I contributed to bring about this happy termination by allowing little Popinot to pluck me so easily. I am as glad of your happiness as if it were my own."

"It is the only way open to you," said Pillerault, "for you will never experience it yourself."

"What do you mean, sir?" asked du Tillet.

"A good dig in the ribs, by George," said Lebas, smiling at Pillerault's malicious revenge. He knew nothing of the part that du Tillet had played, but he looked on him as a scoundrel.

Matifat saw César, and immediately all the most respected merchants crowded about the perfumer; he received an ovation on 'Change, the most flattering congratulations and handshakes, which caused here and there some heart-burnings, and here and there a pang of remorse, for fifty out of every hundred present had been insolvent at some time or other.

Gigonnet and Gobseck, chatting in a corner, stared at César as the learned must have stared when the first electric eel was brought for their inspection, and they beheld that strange curiosity, a living Leyden jar.

Then, still breathing the incense of triumph, César went out to the cab, and drove home to his house, where the marriage-contract between his dear child Césarine and the devoted Popinot was to be signed that evening. He laughed nervously, in a way that alarmed his three old friends.

It is one of the mistakes of youth to imagine that every one has the vitality of youth, a defect nearly akin to its best endowment; for youth does not behold life through a pair of spectacles, but through the radiant hues of a reflected glow, and age itself is credited with its own exuberant life. Popinot, like César and Constance, cherished memories of the pomp and splendor of the ball, the strains of Collinet's orchestra had often rung in his ears; he had seen the gay throng of dancers, and tasted the joy so cruelly punished, as Adam and Eve might have thought of the forbidden fruit which banished them from the Garden, and brought Death and Birth into the world, for it seems that the multiplication of the angels is one of the mysteries of the Paradise above.

Popinot, however, could think of that night's festivity not only without remorse, but with joy in his heart, for then it was that Césarine in all her glory had given her promise

to him in his poverty. That evening he had known beyond all doubt that he was loved for himself alone. So when he paid Célestin for the rooms which Grindot had restored, and stipulated that everything should be left untouched; when he had carefully seen that the merest trifles belonging to César and Constance were in their place, he had dreamed of giving a ball there on the day of his wedding. The preparations for the fête had been a work of love. It should be exactly like the previous one, except in the extravagances. Extravagance was over and done with. Still, the dinner was to be served by Chevet, and the guests were almost the same. The Abbé Loraux took the place of the Grand-Chancellor; and Lebas, the President of the Tribunal of Commerce, was to be there. Popinot added M. Camusot's name to the list, as an acknowledgment of the kindness he had shown to Birotteau in so many ways. M. de Vandenesse and M. de Fontaine took the place of M. and Mme. Roguin.

Césarine and Popinot had exercised their discretion in the matter of invitations to the ball. They both shrank from making a festival of their wedding, and had avoided the publicity which jars on pure and tender hearts by giving the dance on the occasion of the signing of the contract. Constance had found the cherry-colored velvet dress in which she had shone for the brief space of a single day; and Césarine had pleased herself by surprising Popinot in the ball-dress of which he had talked times out of mind. So the house was to wear the same air of an enchanted festival, and neither Constance, nor Césarine, nor Anselme thought that there was any danger for César in this joyful surprise. They waited till four o'clock, and grew almost childish in their happiness.

After the hero of the hour had passed through the indescribable emotions of returning to the Exchange, a fresh shock awaited him in the Rue Saint-Honoré. As he came up the stairs, which still looked new, he saw his wife in the cherry-colored velvet dress; he saw Césarine, the Comte de Fontaine, the Vicomte de Vandenesse, the Baron de la Billardière, and the great Vauquelin; a light film spread over his eyes, and

Uncle Pillerault, on whose arm he leaned, felt the shudder that ran through his nephew.

"It is too much for him," the old philosopher said to the enamored Anselme; "he will not stand all the wine which you have poured out for him."

But all hearts beat so high with joy, that César's emotion and tottering steps were ascribed to an intoxication, very natural, as they thought—but not seldom fatal. When he looked round the drawing-room, and saw it filled with guests and women in ball toilets, the sublime rhythm of the *finale* of Beethoven's great symphony beat in his pulses and flooded his brain. That imaginary music streamed in on him like rays of light, sparkling from modulation to modulation; it was to be indeed the *finale* that rang clear and high through the recesses of the tired brain. Overcome by the harmony that swept through him, he laid his hand on his wife's arm, and in tones, rendered almost inaudible by the effort to keep back the flowing blood which filled his mouth:

"I am not well," he said.

Constance, in alarm, led her husband to her room; he was barely able to reach the armchair, into which he sank, exclaiming, "M. Haudry! M. Loraux!"

The Abbé came in, followed by the guests and women in evening dress, who stood in consternation. César in the midst of this brightly-colored throng grasped his confessor's hand, and laid his head on the breast of the wife who knelt beside him. A blood-vessel had been ruptured in the lungs, and the resulting aneurism was stopping his last breath.

"Behold the death of the righteous!" the Abbé Loraux said solemnly, as he stretched his hand towards César with one of those Divine gestures which Rembrandt's inspiration beheld and recorded in his picture of Christ raising Lazarus from the dead.

Christ bade Earth surrender her prey; the good priest sped a soul to heaven, where the martyr to commercial integrity should receive an unfading palm.

THE SECRETS OF A PRINCESS

To Théophile Gautier.

After the disasters of the Revolution of July 1830 had wrecked the fortunes of many a noble family dependent upon the Court, Mme. la Princesse de Cadignan had the address to blame political events for the total ruin due in reality to her own extravagance. The Prince had left France with the Royal Family, but the Princess stayed on in Paris, the very fact of her husband's absence securing her from arrest. He, and he alone, was responsible for a burden of debt which could not be discharged by the sale of all his available property. The creditors had taken over the revenues of the entail, and the affairs of the great family were, in short, in as bad a way as the fortunes of the elder branch of the Bourbons. Things being thus, the Princesse de Cadignan (the lady so celebrated in her day as the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse) made up her mind to live in complete retirement, and tried to make the world forget her. And in the dizzy current of events which swept Paris away, Mme. de Maufrigneuse was soon lost to sight in the Princesse de Cadignan, and became almost a stranger to society; the new actors brought upon the stage by the Revolution of July knew nothing of the metamorphosis.

In France the title of duke takes precedence over all others, even over the title of prince; albeit it is laid down unequivocally in heraldry that titles signify absolutely nothing, and that all the nobly born are perfectly equal. This admirable theory was conscientiously put in practice in former times by the royal house of France; indeed, it is still carried out in the letter at any rate, for kings of France are careful to give their sons the simple title of count. By virtue of the

same system Francis I. signed himself "Francis, Lord of Vanves," thereby eclipsing the splendid array of titles assumed by that pompous monarch, Charles V. Louis XI. had even gone further when he gave his daughter to Pierre de Beaujeu, a simple gentleman. The feudal system was so thoroughly broken up by Louis XIV. that the title of duke in his reign became the supreme and most coveted honor.

Nevertheless, there are two or three families in France, in which the principality consists of great territorial possessions, handed down from former times, and in these it ranks above the duchy. The House of Cadignan is one of these exceptions, the eldest son is the Duc de Maufrigneuse, and the younger brothers are simply Chevaliers de Cadignan.

The Cadignans, like two princes of the House of Rohan in other times, have a right to a chair of state in their own house, and may keep a retinue of pages, gentlemen, in their service. This is a necessary piece of explanation, given partly to anticipate absurd criticisms from persons who know nothing of the matter, partly too as a record of an old stately order of things in a world which is said to be passing away, an order of things which some, who understand it but little, are very eager to abolish.

The Cadignans bear *or five fusils sable conjoined in fesse*, with the motto MEMINI, and a close crown, without supporters or lambrequins. What with the prevalent ignorance of heraldry in these days, and a mighty influx of foreigners to Paris, the title of prince is beginning to enjoy a certain vogue; but it is usually only a courtesy title. There are no real princes in France save those who inherit domains with their name, and are entitled to be addressed as "Your Highness." The disdain felt for the title by the old noblesse, and the reasons which led Louis XIV. to give supremacy to the rank of duke, prevented France from claiming the style of Highness for the few princes in existence (those of Napoleon's creation excepted). This is how the Princes de Cadignan came to rank nominally below other princes on the continent of Europe.

The persons known collectively as the Faubourg Saint-Germain protected the Princess; treating her with a respectful discretion due to a name that will always be honored, to misfortunes which no longer gave rise to talk, and to Mme. de Cadignan's beauty, which was all that remained of her faded glory. The world that she had adorned gave her credit for thus taking the veil, as it were, and entering the cloister in her own house. For her, of all women, such a piece of good taste involved an immense sacrifice; and in France anything great is always so keenly appreciated, that the Princess' retreat gained for her all the ground that she had lost in public opinion while her splendor was at its height. Of her old friends among women, she only saw the Marquise d'Espard; and as yet she was never seen in public on great occasions, or at evening parties. The Princess and the Marquise called upon one another, very early in the morning, and, as it were, in secret; and when the Princess dined with her friend, the Marquise closed her doors to every one else.

Mme. d'Espard's behavior was admirable. She changed her box at the Italiens, coming down from the first tier to a *baignoire* on the ground floor, so that Mme. de Cadignan could come and depart without being seen. Not every woman would have been capable of such a piece of delicacy which deprived her of the pleasure of dragging a former and fallen rival in her train, and posing as her benefactress. Thus enabled to dispense with ruinous toilettes, the Princess went privately in the Marquise's carriage, which in public she would have refused to take. Nobody ever knew why Mme. d'Espard behaved in this way; but her conduct was sublime, involving a whole host of the little sacrifices which seem mere trifles in themselves, but taken as a whole reach giant proportions. In 1832 the snows of three years had covered the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse's adventures, whitening them so effectually that nothing short of a prodigious effort of memory could recall the heavy indictments formerly laid to her charge. Of the queen adored by so many courtiers, of the duchess whose levities might furnish a novelist with several

volumes, there now remained an exquisitely fair woman of thirty-six, who might have passed for thirty in spite of her nineteen-year-old son.

Georges, Duc de Maufrigneuse, beautiful as Antinous, and poor as Job, was certain of a great career; and his mother's first wish was to see him married to a great fortune. Perhaps she meant to choose an heiress for him some day out of Mme. d'Espard's salon, which was supposed to be the first in Paris; perhaps this was the real reason of her intimacy with the Marquise. The Princess, looking forward, saw another five years of retirement before her; five desolate lonely years; but if Georges was to marry well, her conduct must receive the hall-mark of virtue.

The Princess lived in a modest ground-floor flat in a mansion in the Rue de Miromesnil, where relics of bygone splendor had been turned to account. A great lady's elegance still pervaded everything. She had surrounded herself with beautiful things, which told their own story of a life in high spheres. The magnificent miniature of Charles X. above her chimney-piece was painted by Mme. de Mirbel, and bore the legend, "Given by the King," engraved on the frame. The companion picture was a portrait of Madame, who had been so peculiarly gracious to her. The album that shone conspicuous on one of the tables was an almost priceless treasure, which none of the bourgeoises that rule our modern money-making and censorious society would dare to exhibit in public. It was a piece of audacity that paints the Princess' character to admiration. The album was full of portraits, some thirty among them belonging to intimate friends —lovers, the world said. As to numbers, this was a slander; but with regard to some ten of them perhaps, as the Marquise d'Espard said, there was a good, broad foundation for the calumny. However that might be, Maxime de Trailles, de Marsay, Rastignac, the Marquis d'Esgrignon, General de Montriveau, the Marquises de Ronquerolles and d'Ajuda-Pinto, Prince Galathionne, the young Duc de Grandlieu, the young Duc de Rhétoré, the young Vicomte de Sérizy, and

Lucien de Rubempré's beautiful face, had all received most flattering treatment from the brushes of the famous portrait-painters of the day. At this time the Princess had only received two or three of the originals of the portraits, and pleasantly called the book "My Collection of Errors."

Adversity had made a good mother of Mme. la Princesse. Her amusements during the first fifteen years of the Restoration had left her little time to think of her son; but now, when she took refuge in obscurity, this illustrious egoist bethought herself that maternal sentiment pushed to an extreme would win absolution for her. Her past life would be condoned by sentimental people, who will pardon anything to a fond mother, and she loved her son so much the better because she had nothing else left to love. Georges de Maufrigneuse was, for that matter, a son of whom any mother might have been proud. And the Princess had made all kinds of sacrifices for him. Georges had a stable and coach-house, and inhabited three daintily-furnished rooms in the entresol above, which gave upon the street.

His mother stinted herself to keep a horse for him to ride, a cab-horse, and a diminutive servant. The Duke's tiger had a hard time of it! "Toby," once in the service of "the late Beaudenord"—for in this jocular manner young men of fashion were wont to allude to that ruined dandy—Toby, to repeat, now turned twenty-five years of age, and still supposed to be fourteen, must groom the horses, clean the cab or the tilbury, go out with his master, keep his rooms in order, and be on hand in the Princess' antechamber to admit visitors, if by any chance a visitor called on her.

When you considered the part that the beautiful Duchesse de Maufrigneuse had played under the Restoration; how she had been one of the queens of Paris, a radiant queen, leading a life so luxurious that even the wealthiest women of fashion in London might have taken lessons of her; it was something indescribably touching to see her in that mere nutshell of a place in the Rue de Miromesnil, only a few doors away from the huge hôtel de Cadignan, which nobody was rich enough

to live in, so that the speculative builder's hammer brought it down. The woman for whom thirty servants were scarce sufficient, the mistress of the finest salons and the prettiest *petits appartements* in which she entertained so splendidly, was now living in a suite of five rooms—an antechamber, a dining-room, a drawing-room, a bedroom, and dressing-room —with a couple of women servants for her whole establishment.

"Ah! she is an admirable mother," that shrewd woman the Marquise d'Espard would remark, "and admirable without overdoing it. She is happy. Nobody would have believed that such a frivolous woman would be capable of taking a resolution and following it up so persistently as she does. And our good Archbishop has encouraged her, he is goodness itself to her, he has just persuaded the dowager Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne to call upon her."

In any case, let us own that no one but a queen can abdicate, and descend nobly from the lofty elevation which is never utterly lost to her. It is only those who are conscious that they are nothing in themselves that will waste regrets on their decline, and pity themselves, and turn to a past that will never return for them. They know instinctively that success will not come twice. The Princess was forced to do without the rare flowers with which she had been wont to surround herself, a setting that enhanced her beauty, for no one could fail to compare her to a flower. Wherefore she had chosen her ground-floor flat with care, so as to enjoy a pretty little garden with flowering trees and a green grass-plot to brighten her quiet rooms all through the year.

Her annual income possibly amounted to twelve thousand francs or thereabouts, but even that modest sum was made up partly by an allowance from the old Duchesse de Navarreins (the young Duke's paternal aunt), partly by contributions from the Duchesse d'Uxelles, who was living on her estate in the country, and saving as none but dowager-duchesses can save; Harpagon was a mere tyro in comparison.

The Prince de Cadignan lived abroad, always at the orders

of his exiled masters. He shared their adversity, serving them with a devotion as disinterested, and perhaps rather more intelligent than that of most other adherents of fallen royalty. His position was even now a protection to his wife in Paris. In such obscurity did the Princess live, and so little did her destitution arouse the suspicions of the Government, that a certain Marshal, to whom France owes an African province, used to meet Legitimist leaders at her house and hold counsel with them while Madame was making the attempt in La Vendée.

Foreseeing the approaching bankruptcy of love, and the drawing nigh of that fortieth year beyond which there lies so little for a woman, the Princess launched forth into the realms of politics and philosophy. She took to reading!—she who for the last sixteen years had shown the utmost abhorrence of anything serious! Literature and politics to-day take the place of devoutness as the last refuge of feminine affectation. It was said in fashionable circles that Diane meant to write a book. During this transition period, when the beautiful woman of other days was preparing to fade into a woman of intellect, until such time as she should fade away for good, Diane made of the reception at her house a privilege in the highest degree flattering for the persons thus favored. Under cover of these occupations she contrived to hoodwink de Marsay, one of her early lovers, and now the most influential member of the Government of the Citizen King. Several times she received visits from the Prime Minister in the evening while the Legitimist leaders and the Marshal were actually assembled in her bedroom, discussing plans for winning back the kingdom, and forgetting in their deliberations that the kingdom was not to be won without the help of ideas—the one means of success overlooked by them. It was a pretty woman's revenge thus to inveigle a prime minister and use him as a screen for a conspiracy against his own government; the Princess wrote Madame the sprightliest account of an adventure worthy of the best days of the Fronde.

The young Duc de Maufrigneuse went to La Vendée, and

contrived to come back again quietly and without committing himself, but not until he had shared Madame's perils. When all seemed lost, Madame sent him back, unfortunately perhaps, for a young man's impassioned vigilance might possibly have foiled treachery.

Great as Mme. de Maufrigneuse's transgressions might have been in the eyes of the middle-class matron, her son's behavior blotted them all out for the aristocratic world. It was something great and noble surely to risk the life of an only son and the heir to an historic name in this way. There are persons, reputed clever, who redeem the faults of private life by political services, and *vice versâ*. But the Princesse de Cadignan had acted without calculation of any kind. Perhaps there is never calculation on the part of those who so conduct their lives; and circumstances account for a good half of many seeming inconsistencies.

On one of the first fine days in May 1833, the Marquise d'Espard and the Princess were taking a turn, they could scarcely be said to be taking a walk, along the one garden path beside the grass plot. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon, the sun was taking leave of the garden for the day, but the air was warm with heat reflected from the walls, and the air was full of the scent of flowers brought by the Marquise.

"We shall lose de Marsay soon," Mme. d'Espard was saying, "and with him goes your last hope of fortune for the Duc de Maufrigneuse; since you played such a successful trick on that great politician, his affection for you has sensibly increased."

"My son shall never come to terms with the younger branch, even if he must starve first and I should have to work for him," returned the Princess. "But Berthe de Cinq-Cygne has no aversion for him."

"The younger generation is not bound in the same way as the older——"

"Let us say nothing about that. If I fail to tame the Mar-

quise de Cinq-Cygne, it will be quite bad enough to be forced to marry my son to some blacksmith's daughter, as young d'Esgrignon did."

"Did you love him?" asked the Marquise.

"No," the Princess answered gravely, "d'Esgrignon's naiveté was only a kind of provincial's callowness, as I found out a little too late, or too soon, if you prefer it."

"And de Marsay?"

"De Marsay played with me as if I were a doll. I was almost a girl. We never love the men who take the office of tutor upon themselves; they grate overmuch on our little susceptibilities."

"And that wretched boy who hanged himself?"

"Lucien? An Antinous and a great poet. I worshiped him in all conscience, and I might have been happy. But he was in love with a girl of the town; and I gave him up to Mme. de Sérizy. . . . If he had cared to love me, should I have given him up?"

"What an odd thing, that you should come into collision with an Esther!"

"She was handsomer than I," said the Princess.—"Very soon I shall have spent three years in complete solitude," she went on after a pause. "Well, there has been nothing painful in the quiet. To you, and you only, I will venture to say that I have been happy. Adoration palled upon me; I was jaded without enjoyment; the surface impressions never went deeper into my heart. All the men that I had known were petty, mean, and superficial, I thought; not one of them did anything in the least unexpected; they had neither innocence, nor greatness, nor delicacy. I should have liked to find some one of whom I could stand in awe."

"Then, is it with you as it is with me, my dear? Have you tried to love and never found love?"

"Never," broke in the Princess, laying a hand on her friend's arm. The two women went across to a rustic bench under a mass of jessamine now flowering for the second time. Both had spoken words full of solemn import for women at their age.

"Like you," resumed the Princess, "I have been more loved, perhaps, than other women; but through so many adventures, I feel that I have never known happiness. I have done many reckless things, but always with an end in view, and that end receded as I advanced. My heart has grown old with an innocence unfathomed in it. Yes, a credulous first love lies unawakened beneath all the experience, and I feel too that I am young and fair, in spite of so much weariness, so many blighting influences. We may love, yet not be happy; we may be happy when we do not love; but to love and to be happy both, to know the two boundless joys of human experience—this is a miracle, and the miracle has not been worked for me."

"Nor for me," said Mme. d'Espard.

"A dreadful regret haunts me in my retreat; I have found pastimes, but I have not loved."

"What an incredible secret!"

"Ah! my dear, these are secrets that we can only confide to each other; nobody in Paris would believe us."

"And if we had not both passed our thirty-sixth year, perhaps we might not make these admissions."

"No. While we are young, we are stupidly fatuous on some points," assented the Princess. "Sometimes we behave like the poverty-stricken youths that play with a toothpick to make others believe that they have dined well."

"After all, here we are," Mme. d'Espard said, with bewitching grace, and a charming gesture as of innocence grown wise; "here we are, and there is still enough life in us, it seems to me, for a return game."

"When you told me the other day that Béatrix had gone off with Conti, I thought about it all night long," said the Princess, after a pause. "A woman must be very happy indeed to sacrifice her position and her future, and to give up the world for ever like that."

"She is a little fool," Mme. d'Espard returned gravely. "Mlle. des Touches was only too delighted to be rid of Conti. Béatrix could not see that it was a strong proof that there was

nothing in Conti when a clever woman gave him up without making a defence of her so-called happiness for a single moment."

"Then is she going to be unhappy?"

"She is unhappy now. What was the good of leaving her husband? What is it but an admission of weakness in a wife?"

"Then, do you think that Mme. de Rochefide's motive was not a desire to experience a complete love, that bliss of loving and being loved which for us both is still a dream?"

"No. She aped Mme. de Beauséant and Mme. de Langeais, who, between ourselves, would have been as great figures as La Vallière, or the Montespan, or Diane de Poitiers, or the Duchesses d'Étampes or de Chateauroux, in any age less commonplace than ours."

"Oh, with the king omitted, yes, my dear. Ah! if I could only call up those women, and ask them if——"

"But there is no necessity to call up the dead," broke in the Marquise; "we know living women who are happy. A score of times I have begun intimate talk about this kind of thing with the Comtesse de Montcornet. For fifteen years she has been the happiest woman under the sun with that little Émile Blondet. Not an infidelity, not a thought from another; they are still as they were at the first. But somebody always comes to disturb us at the most interesting point. Then there is Rastignac and Mme. de Nucingen, and your cousin Mme. de Camps and that Octave of hers; there is a secret in these long attachments; they know something, dear, that we neither of us know. The world does us the exceeding honor to take us for *rouées* worthy of the Court of the Regency, and we are as innocent as two little boarding-school misses."

"I should be glad to have even that innocence," the Princess exclaimed mockingly; "ours is worse, there is something humiliating in it. There is no help for it! We will offer up the mortification to God in expiation of our fruitless quest of love; for it is scarcely likely, dear, that in our Martin's sum-

mer we shall find the glorious flower that did not bloom for us in May and June."

"That is not the question," rejoined the Marquise after a pause, filled by meditative retrospect. "We are still handsome enough to inspire love, but we shall never convince any one of our innocence and virtue."

"If it were a falsehood, it should soon be garnished with commentaries, served up with the pretty art that makes a lie credible, and swallowed down like delicious fruit. But to make a truth credible!—Ah! the greatest men have perished in that attempt," added the Princess, with a subtle smile that Leonardo's brush alone could render.

"Fools can sometimes love," said the Marquise.

"Yes; but not even fools are simple enough to believe this," pointed out the Princess.

"You are right," the Marquise said, laughing. "We ought not to look to a fool or a man of talent for the solution of the problem. There is nothing for it but genius. In genius alone do you find a child's trustfulness, the religion of love, and a willingness to be blindfolded. Look at Canalis and the Duchesse de Chaulieu. If you and I ever came across men of genius, they were too remote from our lives, and too busy; we were too frivolous, too much carried away and taken up with other things."

"Ah! and yet I should not like to leave this world without knowing the joy of love to the full," exclaimed the Princess.

"It is nothing to inspire love," said Mme. d'Espard; "it is a question of feeling it. I see many women that are only pegs on which to hang a passion, and not at once its cause and effect."

"The last passion that I inspired was something sacred and noble," said the Princess; "a future lay before it. Chance, for this once, sent me the man of genius, our due; the due so difficult to come by, for there are more pretty women than men of genius. But the devil was in it."

"Do tell me about it, dear; this is quite new to me."

"I only discovered his romantic passion in the winter of

1829. Every Friday at the Opéra I used to see a man of thirty or thereabouts sitting in the same place in the orchestra; he used to look at me with eyes of fire, saddened at times by the thought of the distance between us and the impossibility of success."

"Poor fellow, we grow very stupid when we are in love," said the Marquise. The Princess smiled at the friendly epigram.

"He used to slip out into the corridor between the acts," she went on. "Once or twice, to see me or to be seen, he pressed his face against the pane of glass in the next box. If people came to my box, I used to see him glued in the doorway to steal a glance. He knew every one in my set by sight at last. He used to follow them to my box, for the sake of having the door left ajar. Poor fellow, he must have found out who I was very soon, for he knew M. de Maufrigneuse and my father-in-law by sight. Afterwards I used to see my mysterious stranger at the Italiens, sitting in a stall just opposite, so that he could look up at me in unfeigned ecstasy. It was pretty to see it. After the Opéra or the Bouffons, I used to see him planted on his two feet in the crush. People elbowed him, he stood firm. The light died out of his eyes when he saw me leaning on the arm of some one in favor. As for anything else, not a word, not a letter, not a sign. This was in good taste, you must admit. Sometimes in the morning, when I came back to my house, I would find him again, sitting on a stone by the gateway. This love-stricken man had very fine eyes, a long, thick fan-shaped beard, a royale, and a moustache and whiskers; you could see nothing of his face but the pale skin over the cheek bones and a noble forehead. It was a truly antique head.

"The Prince, as you know," she continued, "defended the Tuileries on the side of the Quais in July. He came to Saint-Cloud the evening that all was lost. 'I was all but killed, dear, at four o'clock,' he said. 'One of the insurgents had leveled his gun at me, when the leader of the attack, a young man with a long beard whom I have seen at the Italiens, I think,

struck down the barrel.' The shot hit somebody else, a quarter-master, I believe, two paces away from my husband. So it was plain that the young fellow was a Republican.

"In 1831 when I came to live here I saw him leaning against the house wall. He seemed to rejoice over my calamities; perhaps he thought that they brought us nearer together. But I never saw him again after the Saint-Merri affair; he was killed that day. The day before General Lamarque's funeral I walked out with my son, and our Republican went with us, sometimes behind, sometimes in front, from the Madeleine to the Passage des Panoramas where I was going."

"Is that all?" asked the Marquise.

"All," returned the Princess. "Oh yes; the morning after Saint-Merri was taken a boy out of the street came and must speak to me; he gave me a letter written on cheap paper, and signed with the stranger's name."

"Let me see it," said the Marquise.

"No, dear. The love in that man's heart was something so great and sacred that I cannot betray his confidence. It stirs my heart to think of that short terrible letter, and the dead writer moves me more than any of the living men that I have singled out. He haunts me."

"Tell me his name?"

"Oh, quite a common one—Michel Chrestien."

"You did well to tell me of it," Mme. d'Espard answered quickly; "I have often heard of him. Michel Chrestien was a friend of a well-known writer whom you have already wished to see—that Daniel d'Arthez who comes to my house once or twice in a winter. This Chrestien, who died, as a matter of fact, at Saint-Merri, did not lack friends. I have heard it said that he was one of those great politicians who, like de Marsay, need nothing but a turn of the wheel of chance to be on a sudden all that they ought to be."

"Then it is better that he should be dead," said the Princess, hiding her thoughts beneath a melancholy expression.

"Do you care to meet d'Arthez some evening at my house?"

asked the Marquise. "You could talk with him of your ghost."

"Very willingly, dear."

Some days after this conversation, Blondet and Rastignac, knowing d'Arthez, promised Mme. d'Espard that he should dine with her. The promise would scarcely have been prudent if the Princess' name had not been mentioned, but the great man of letters could not be indifferent to the opportunity of an introduction to her.

Daniel d'Arthez is one of the very few men of our day who combine great gifts with a great nature. He had at this time won, not all the popularity that his work deserved, but a respectful esteem to which the chosen few could add nothing. His reputation certainly would increase, but in the eyes of connoisseurs he had practically reached his full development. Some writers find their true level soon or late, and once for all, and d'Arthez was one of them. Poor, and of good family, he had rightly guessed the spirit of the age, and trusted not to his ancestor's name, but the name won by himself. For many years he fought his battle in the arena of Paris, to the annoyance of a rich uncle, who left the obscure writer to languish in the direst poverty. Afterwards, when his nephew became famous, he left him all his money, a piece of inconsistency to be laid to the score of vanity. The sudden transition from poverty to wealth made no change whatever in Daniel d'Arthez's way of life. He continued his work with simplicity worthy of ancient times, and laid new burdens upon himself by accepting a seat in the Chamber of Deputies, on the benches to the Right.

Since his name became known in the world he had occasionally gone into society. An old friend of his, the great doctor Horace Bianchon, had introduced him to the Baron de Rastignac, an under-secretary of state, and a friend of de Marsay's. These were the two politicians who nobly enough gave Michel Chrestien's friends permission to look for his dead body in the cloisters of Saint-Merri, and to bury the Re-

publican with due honors. Gratitude for a service which contrasted strongly with the rigor used by the administration at a time when party spirit ran so high, formed a bond, as it were, between d'Arthez and Rastignac, a bond which the under-secretary of state and the illustrious minister were too adroit not to turn to account. Several of Michel Chrestien's friends held opposite opinions in politics; these had been won over and attached to the new government. One of them, Léon Giraud, first received the appointment of Master of Requests, and afterwards became a Councillor of State.

Daniel d'Arthez's life was entirely devoted to his work. He saw society by glimpses only; it was a sort of dream for him. His house was a convent. He led the life of a Benedictine, with a Benedictine's sober rule, a Benedictine's regularity of occupation. His friends knew that he had always dreaded the accident of a woman's entry into his life, he had studied woman too well not to fear her; and by dint of much study he knew less of his subject, much as your profound tactician is always beaten under unforeseen conditions when scientific axioms will not apply. He turned the face of an experienced observer upon the world while he was still at heart a completely unsophisticated boy. The seeming paradox is quite intelligible to any one who can appreciate the immense distance set between faculties and sentiments—for the former proceed from the brain, the latter from the heart. A man may be great, and yet be a villain, and a fool may rise to sublime heights of love. D'Arthez was one of the richly endowed beings in whom a keen brain and a wide range of intellectual gifts have not excluded a capacity for deep and noble feeling. By a rare privilege he was both a doer and a thinker. His private life was noble and pure. Carefully as he had shunned love hitherto, he was learned in love; he knew beforehand how great an ascendency passion would gain over him. But poverty and cold, and the heavy strain of the preparation of the solid groundwork of his brilliant after-achievements, had acted marvelously as a preservative. Then his circumstances grew easier, and he formed a commonplace and utterly in-

comprehensible connection; the woman certainly was good-looking enough, but without manners or education, and socially his inferior. She was kept carefully out of sight.

Michel Chrestien maintained that men of genius possess the power of transforming the most massive women into sylphs; for them the silliest of the sex have sense and wit, and the peasant-girl is a marquise; the more accomplished the woman, the more (according to Chrestien) she loses in their eyes, because she leaves less to the imagination. He also held that love (a purely physical craving for lower natures) becomes for the higher, the greatest achievement of the soul of man; the closest and strongest of all ties that bind two human creatures to each other. By way of justifying d'Arthez, he instanced Raphael and the Fornarina. (He might have taken himself as a model in that kind, since he saw an angel in the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse.) But d'Arthez's strange fancy was explicable in many ways. Perhaps at the outset he lost all hope of finding a woman to correspond to the exquisite visionary ideal, the fond dream of every intelligent man; perhaps his heart was too fastidiously sensitive, too delicate to surrender to a woman of the world; perhaps he preferred to do as nature bade while keeping his illusions and cultivating his ideal; or had he put love far from him as something incompatible with work, with the regularity of a cloistered life, in which passion might have worked confusion?

For some months past Blondet and Rastignac had rallied him on this score, reproaching him with knowing nothing of the world nor of women. To hear them talk, his works were numerous enough and advanced enough to permit of some diversion; he had a fine fortune, yet he lived like a student; he had had no pleasure from his fame or his wealth; he knew nothing of the exquisite delights of the noble and delicate passion that a high-born, high-bred woman can inspire and feel. Was it not unworthy in him to know love only in its gross material aspects? Love reduced to the thing that nature made it was, in their eyes, the most besotted folly. It was the glory of civilization that it had created Woman, when

nature stopped short at the female; nature cared for nothing but the perpetuation of the species, whereas civilization invented the perpetuation of desire; and, in short, discovered love, the fairest of man's religions. D'Arthez knew nothing of charming subtleties of language; nothing of proofs of affection continually given by the brain and soul; nothing of desire ennobled by expression; nothing of the divine form that a high-bred woman lends to the grossest materialism. D'Arthez might know women, but he knew nothing of the divinity. A prodigious deal of art, a fair presentment of body and soul, was indispensable in a woman, if love was worthy to be called love. In short, the tempters vaunted that delicious corruption of the imagination which constitutes a Parisienne's coquetry; they pitied d'Arthez because he lived on plain and wholesome fare, and had not tasted luxuries prepared with the Parisienne's skill in these high culinary arts, and whetted his curiosity. At length Dr. Bianchon, recipient of d'Arthez's confidences, knew that this curiosity was aroused. The connection formed by the great man of letters with a commonplace woman, far from growing more agreeable with use and wont, had become intolerable to him; but the excessive shyness that seizes upon solitary men was holding him back.

"What?" said Rastignac, "when a man bears per bend *gules* and *or,* a besant and a torteau counterchanged, why does he not allow the old Picard scutcheon to shine on his carriage? You have thirty thousand livres a year and all that you make by your pen; you have made good your motto—Ars thesaur*usque virtus,* an old punning device such as our ancestors loved—yet you will not air it in the Bois de Boulogne! Good qualities ought not to hide themselves in this age."

"If you read your work over to that fat Laforêt-like creature who solaces your existence, I would forgive you for keeping her," put in Blondet. "But, my dear fellow, if you live on dry bread materially speaking, mentally you have not so much as a crust."

These friendly skirmishes between Daniel and his friends

had been going on for some months before Mme. d'Espard asked Rastignac and Blondet to induce d'Arthez to dine with her, saying as she did so that the Princesse de Cadignan was extremely anxious to make the famous writer's acquaintance. There are women for whom curiosities of this kind have all the attraction that magic-lantern pictures possess for children; but the pleasure for the eyes is poor enough at the best, and fraught with disenchantment. The more interesting a clever man seems at a distance, the less he answers expectations on a nearer view; the more brilliant he was imagined to be, the duller the figure that he subsequently cuts. And it may be added, parenthetically, that disappointed curiosity is apt to be unjust. D'Arthez was not to be deluded by Rastignac or Blondet, but they told him laughingly that here was a most alluring opportunity of rubbing the rust off his heart, of discovering something of the supreme felicity to be gained through the love of a Parisian great lady. The Princess was positively smitten with him; there was nothing to fear; he had everything to gain from the interview; he could not possibly descend from the pedestal on which Mme. de Cadignan had placed him. Neither Blondet nor Rastignac saw any harm in crediting the Princess with this love-affair; her past had furnished so many anecdotes that she could surely bear the weight of the slander. For d'Arthez's benefit, they proceeded to relate the adventures of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse. Beginning with Her Grace's first flirtations with de Marsay, they told of her subsequent escapades with d'Ajuda-Pinto (whom she took from his wife, and so avenged Mme. de Beauséant); and of her third *liaison* with young d'Esgrignon, who went with her to Italy, and got himself into an ugly scrape on her account. Then they told how wretched a certain well-known ambassador had made her; how happy she had been with a Russian general; how she had acted since then as Egeria to two Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and so forth and so forth. D'Arthez told them that he had heard more about her than they could tell him; their poor friend Michel Chrestien had worshiped her in his secret heart for four years, and all but lost his wits for her.

"I often used to go with him to the Italiens or the Opéra," Daniel said. "He and I used to rush along the streets to keep up with her horses, while he gazed at the Princess through the windows of her brougham. The Prince de Cadignan owed his life to that love affair; a street-boy was going to fire at him when Michel stopped him."

"Well, well, you will find a subject ready made," smiled Blondet. "Just the woman you want; she will only be cruel through delicacy; she will initiate you into the mysteries of refined luxury in the most gracious way; but take care! She has run through many a fortune. The fair Diane is a spendthrift of the order that costs not a centime, but for whom men spend millions. Give yourself body and soul if you will, but keep a hold of your purse, like the old man in Girodet's picture of the *Deluge*."

This conversation invested the Princess with the grace of a queen, the corruption of a diplomatist, the mystery of an initiation, the depth of an abyss, and the danger of a siren. D'Arthez's ingenious friends, being quite unable to foresee the results of their hoax, ended by making Diane d'Uxelles the most portentous Parisienne, the cleverest coquette, the most bewildering courtesan in the world. They were right; and yet the woman so lightly spoken of was sacred and divine for d'Arthez. There was no need to work upon his curiosity. He agreed to meet her at the first asking, and that was all his friends wanted of him.

Mme. d'Espard went to the Princess as soon as the invitation was accepted.

"Do you feel that you are in good looks and good form for coquetry, dear?" she asked. "Come and dine with me in a few days' time, and I will serve you up d'Arthez. Our man of genius is the shyest of the shy; he is afraid of women; he has never been in love. Here is a subject for you. He is extremely clever, and so simple that he disarms suspicion and puts you at a disadvantage. His perspicacity is altogether of the retrospective kind; it acts after the event, and throws out all your calculations. You may take him in to-day; to-morrow he is not to be duped by anything."

"Ah! if I were only thirty years old, I would have some fun," said the Princess. "The one thing wanting in my life hitherto has been a man of genius to outwit. I have always had partners, never an adversary. Love was a game, not a contest."

"Admit that I am very generous, dear Princess; for, after all, well-regulated charity——"

The women looked laughingly into each other's faces, and their hands met with a friendly pressure. Surely both of them must have been in possession of important secrets! They certainly did not take account of a man or a service to render; and any sincere and lasting friendship between two women is sure to be cemented by petty crimes. You may see two of these dear friends, each of them quite able to kill the other with the poisoned dagger in her hand; and a touching picture of harmony they present—till the moment comes when one of them chances to let her weapon drop.

In a week's time, therefore, the Marquise gave one of her small evening parties, her *petits jours,* when a few intimate friends were invited by word of mouth, and the hostess shut her door to other visitors. Five people were asked to dinner: Émile Blondet and Mme. de Montcornet, Daniel d'Arthez, Rastignac and the Princesse de Cadignan—three men and, including the mistress of the house, three women. Never did chance permit of more skilful prearrangement than on this occasion of d'Arthez's introduction to Mme. de Cadignan.

Even at this day the Princess is supposed to be one of the best-dressed women in Paris, and for women dress is the first of arts. She wore a blue velvet gown with large white hanging sleeves. The corselet bodice was cut low at the throat; but a sort of chemisette of slightly drawn tulle with a blue border—such as you may see in some of Raphael's portraits—covered her shoulders, leaving only about four fingers' breadth of her neck quite bare. A few sprays of white heather, cleverly arranged by her maid, adorned the fair, rippling hair for which Diane had been famous. In truth, at this moment she looked scarcely five-and-twenty. Four years of solitude and

repose had restored brilliancy to her complexion; and there are moments, surely, when a woman looks more beautiful for the desire to please; the will counts for something in the changes that pass over a face. If persons of sanguine or melancholic temperament turn sallow, and the lymphatic grow livid under the influence of violent emotion, surely it must be conceded that desire and hope and joy are great beautifiers of the complexion; they glow in brilliant light from the eyes, kindling beauty in a face with a fresh brightness like that of a sunny morning. The white fairness for which the Princess was so famous had taken on the rich coloring of mature and majestic womanhood. At this period of her life, reflection and serious thought had left their impression upon her; the dreamy, very noble forehead seemed wonderfully in harmony with the slow queenly gaze of her blue eyes. No physiognomist, however skilled, could have imagined that calculation and decision lay beneath those preternaturally delicate features. Some women's faces baffle science by their repose and fineness, and leave observation at fault; the opportunity of studying them while the passions speak is hard to come by; when the passions have spoken it is too late; by that time a woman is old, she does not care to dissimulate.

The Princess was just such an inscrutable feminine mystery. Whatever she chose to be she could be. She was playful, childlike, distractingly innocent; or subtle, serious, and disquietingly profound. When she came to the Marquise's, she meant to be a simple, sweet woman, who had known life only by its deceptions; a soulful, much-slandered, but resigned victim, a cruelly-used angel, in short.

She came early, so as to take her place beside Mme. d'Espard on the settee by the fireside. She would be seen as she meant to be seen; she would arrange her attitude with an art concealed by an exquisite ease; her pose should be of the elaborated and studied kind which brings out all the beauty of the curving line that begins at the foot, rises gracefully to the hips, and continues through wonderful sinuous contours to the shoulder, outlining the whole length of the body. Nudity

would be less dangerous than draperies so artfully arranged to cover and reveal every line. With a subtlety beyond the reach of many women, Diane had brought her son with her. For a moment Mme. d'Espard beheld the Duc de Maufrigneuse with blank amazement, then her eyes showed that she comprehended the situation. She grasped the Princess' hand with, "I understand! D'Arthez is to be made to accept all the difficulties at the outset, so that you will have nothing to overcome afterwards."

The Comtesse de Montcornet came with Blondet, Rastignac brought d'Arthez. The Princess paid the great man none of the compliments with which ordinary people are lavish on such occasions; but in her advances there was a certain graciousness and deference which could scarcely have been exceeded for any one. Just so, no doubt, she had been with the King of France and the Princes. She seemed pleased to see the great man of letters, and glad to have sought him out. People of taste (and the Princess' taste was excellent) are known by their manner as listeners; by an unfeigned interest and urbanity, which is to politeness what practice is to good doctrine. Her attentive way of listening when d'Arthez spoke was a thousand times more flattering than the most highly-seasoned compliments. The introduction was made by the Marquise quite simply, and with regard to the dues of either.

At dinner, so far from adopting the affectations which some women permit themselves with regard to food, the Princess ate with a very good appetite; she made a point of allowing the natural woman to appear without airs of any kind. D'Arthez sat next to her, and between the courses she entered upon a *tête-à-tête* with him under cover of the general conversation.

"My reason for procuring myself the pleasure of a meeting with you, monsieur," she said, "was a wish to hear something of an unfortunate friend of yours who died for a cause other than ours. I lay under great obligations to him, but it was out of my power to acknowledge or to requite his ser-

vices. The Prince de Cadignan shares my regrets. I have heard that you were one of the poor fellow's most intimate friends, and that disinterested staunch friendship between you gives me a certain claim to your acquaintance; so you will not think it strange that I should wish to hear all that you could tell me of one so dear to you. I am attached to the exiled family, and of course hold monarchical opinions; but I am not of the number of those who think that it is impossible for a Republican to be noble at heart. A monarchy and a republic are the only forms of government which do not stifle nobility of sentiment."

"Michel Chrestien was sublime, madame," Daniel answered with an unsteady voice. "I do not know of a greater man among the heroes of old times. You must not think that he was one of the narrow Republicans who want the Convention and the Committee of Public Safety re-established with its pretty ways. No, Michel used to dream of European Federation on the Swiss model. Set aside the magnificent monarchical system which, in my opinion, is peculiarly suited to our country; and let us admit that Michel's project would mean the abolition of war in the old world, and a Europe constituted afresh on a very different basis from that of ancient conquest, modified subsequently by the feudal system. On this showing the Republicans most nearly approached his theories; and for that reason he fought with them in July and at Saint-Merri. In politics we were diametrically opposed, but none the less we were the closest friends."

"It is the finest possible testimony to both your characters," Mme. de Cadignan said timidly.

"During the last four years of his life he told me of his love for you. No one else knew about it," continued d'Arthez. "We had been like brothers; but that confidence bound us to each other even more closely than before. He alone, madame, would have loved you as you deserve to be loved. Many a wetting I have had, as he and I accompanied your carriage home, running to keep up with the horses, so as not to miss a glimpse of your face—to admire you——"

"Why, monsieur, I shall soon be bound to make compensation——"

"Why is not Michel here?" returned Daniel in a melancholy voice.

"Perhaps he might not have loved me for long," began the Princess with a sorrowful shake of the head. "Republicans are even more absolute in their ideas than we Absolutists who sin through indulgence. He would dream of me as a perfect woman no doubt; he would have been cruelly undeceived. We women are persecuted with slander; and, unlike you literary men, we cannot meet calumny and fight it down by our fame and our achievements. People take us, not for the women we are, but simply as others make us out to be. Others would very soon hide the real unknown self that there is in me by holding up a sham portrait of an imaginary woman, the true Mme. de Maufrigneuse in the eyes of the world. He would think me unworthy of the noble love he bore me, he would think I could not understand." Again the Princess shook her head with its coronet of heather among the bright gold curls. There was something sublime in the movement; it expressed sorrowful misgivings and hidden griefs that could not be uttered. Daniel understood all that it meant. He looked at her with quick sympathy in his eyes.

"Still," she said, "when I saw him again one day, a long while after the Revolution of July, I almost gave way to a wish that came over me to grasp him by the hand, then and there before every one, in the peristyle of the Théâtre Italien, and to give him my bouquet. And then—I thought that such a demonstration of gratitude would be sure to be misconstrued, like so many generous acts that people call 'Mme. de Maufrigneuse's follies'; it will never be in my power to explain them; nobody save God and my son will ever know me as I really am."

Her murmured words, spoken with an accent worthy of a great actress, in tones so low that no one else could overhear them, must have thrilled any listener. They went to d'Arthez's heart. The famous man of letters was quite out of

sight; this was a woman striving to rehabilitate herself for the sake of the dead. Perhaps people had slandered her to him; she wanted to know if anything had tarnished her name for this man who had loved her once. Had he died with all his illusions?

"Michel was one of those men who love wholly and completely," returned d'Arthez; "such as he, if they choose amiss, can suffer, but they can never give up her whom they have chosen."

"Then was I loved like that?" she cried, with a look of high beatitude.

"Yes, madame."

"And he was happy through me?"

"For four years."

"No woman ever hears of such a thing without a feeling of proud satisfaction," she said, and there was a modest confusion in the noble sweet face that turned to his.

One of the cleverest manœuvres known to such actresses is a trick of veiling their manner if words have said too much, or of talking with their eyes when other language falls short. There is an irresistible fascination in these ingenious dissonances that creep into the music of love, or true or feigned.

"To have made a great man happy," she went on (and her voice dropped lower and lower when she had assured herself of the effect that she had produced). "To have made a great man happy, and that without committing a crime—this is the fulfilment of one's destiny, is it not?"

"Did he not write to you?"

"Yes, but I wanted to be quite sure; for, believe me, monsieur, when he set me so high, he was not mistaken in me."

Women have an art of investing their utterances with a certain peculiar sacramental virtue; they can impart an indescribable something to their words, a thrill that gives them a wider significance, a greater depth; and, unless the charmed auditor subsequently takes it into his head to ask himself what those words really meant, the effect is attained—which is the peculiar aim and object of eloquence. If the Princess had

worn the crown of France at that moment, instead of the high plaited coronet of bright hair and wreath of delicate heather, her brows could not have looked more queenly. She seemed to d'Arthez to be walking over the tide of slander as our Saviour walked over the Sea of Galilee; the shroud of her dead love wrapped her round as an aureole clings about an angel. There was not the remotest suggestion that she felt that this was the one position left to her to take up; not a hint of a desire to seem great or loving; it was done simply and quietly. No living man could have done the Princess the service rendered by the dead.

D'Arthez, worker and recluse, had had no experience of the world; study had folded him beneath its sheltering wings. Her words, her tones, found a credulous listener. He had fallen under the spell of her exquisite ways; he was filled with admiration of her flawless beauty, matured by evil fortune, freshened by retirement; he bowed down before that rarest combination—a vivid intellect and a noble soul. He longed, in short, to be Michel Chrestien's heir and successor.

The first beginnings of his love may be traced to an idea—a common case with your profound thinker. While he looked at his neighbor, while his eyes grew familiar with the outlines of her head, the disposition of her delicate features, her shape, her foot, her finely modeled hands; while he saw her now on a closer view than in the days when he accompanied his friend on his wild pursuit of her carriage, he was thinking to himself that here was an instance of that wonderful thing—the power of second-sight developed in a man under the influence of love's exaltation. How clearly Michel Chrestien had read this woman's heart and soul by the light of the fire of love! And she too on her side had divined the Federalist; he might, no doubt, have been happy! In this way the Princess was invested with a great charm for d'Arthez; a halo as of poetry shone about her.

In the course of the dinner, d'Arthez remembered Michel's confidences, Michel's despair, Michel's hopes when he fancied that he was loved in return, and his passionate, lyrical out-

pourings to the one friend to whom he spoke of his love. And Daniel the while was all unconscious that he was to reap the benefit of the preparations due to chance. It very seldom happens that a confidant can pass without remorse to the estate of rival; d'Arthez could do this, and wrong no one now. In one brief moment he realized the immense distance that separates the high-bred lady, the flower of the great world, from the ordinary woman, whom, however, he only knew by a single specimen. He had been approached on his weakest side, touched on the tenderest spots in his soul and genius. His simplicity, his impetuous imagination urged him to possess this woman; but he felt that the world held him back, and the Princess' bearing, her majesty, be it said, raised a barrier between him and her. It was something new to him to respect the woman he loved; and this unwonted feeling acted in a manner as an irritant; the physical attraction grew all the more potent because he had swallowed the bait, and must keep his uneasiness to himself.

They talked of Michel Chrestien till dessert was served. It was an excuse for lowering their voices on either side. Love, sympathy, intuition—here was her opportunity of posing as a slandered, unappreciated woman! here was his chance of stepping into the dead Republican's shoes! Possibly a man of such candid mind may have detected within himself a certain diminution of regret for the loss of his friend.

But when the dessert shone resplendent on the table; when the light of the candles in the sconces fell upon the rich colors of fruit and sugar-plums among the bouquets of flowers; then, under shelter of the brilliant screen of blossoms that separated the guests, it pleased the Princess to put an end to the confidences. With a word, a delicious word, accompanied by one of the glances that seem to turn a fair-haired woman into a brunette, she found some subtle way of expressing the idea that Daniel and Michel were twin souls. After this d'Arthez threw himself into the general conversation with boyish spirits, and a slightly fatuous air not unworthy of a youth at school.

The Princess took d'Arthez's arm in the simplest way

when they returned to the Marquise's little drawing-room. She lingered a little in the great salon, till the Marquise, on Blondet's arm, was at some little distance from them. Then she stopped d'Arthez.

"It is my wish to be not inaccessible to that poor Republican's friend," she said. "I have made it a rule to receive no visitors, but you shall be the one exception. Do not think of this as a favor. Favors are only possible between strangers, and it seems to me that we are old friends. I wish to look on you as Michel's brother."

D'Arthez could only reply by a pressure of the arm; he found nothing to say.

Coffee was served. Diane de Cadignan wrapped herself in a large shawl with coquettish grace, and rose to go. Blondet and Rastignac knew too much of the world and of courtiers' tact to try to detain her or to make any ill-bred outcry; but Mme. d'Espard, taking the Princess by the hand, induced her to sit down again.

"Wait till the servants have dined," she whispered; "the carriage is not ready."

She made a sign to the footman who carried out the coffee tray. Mme. de Montcornet, guessing that Mme. d'Espard wished to speak with the Princess, drew off d'Arthez, Rastignac, and Blondet by one of those wild paradoxical tirades which Parisiennes understand to admiration.

"Well?" asked the Marquise. "What do you think of him?"

"He is simply an adorable child; he is scarcely out of swaddling clothes. Really, even this time there will be a victory without a struggle, as usual."

"It is disheartening," said Mme. d'Espard, "but there is one thing left."

"And that is?"

"Let me be your rival."

"That is as you shall decide. I have made up my mind what to do. Genius is a kind of cerebral existence; I do not know how to reach its heart. We will talk of this later on."

After that last enigmatic remark, Mme. d'Espard made a plunge into the conversation. Apparently she was neither hurt by the words, "That is as you shall decide," nor curious to know what might come of this interview. The Princess stayed nearly an hour longer on the settee by the fireside. She sat in a listless, careless attitude, like Dido in Guérin's picture; and while she seemed to be absorbed in listening, she glanced now and again at Daniel with undisguised yet well-controlled admiration. The carriage was announced. She grasped the Marquise d'Espard's hand, bowed to Mme. de Montcornet, and vanished.

The Princess' name was not mentioned in the course of the evening. The rest of the party, however, reaped the benefit of d'Arthez's uplifted mood; he talked his best; and, indeed, in Rastignac and Blondet he had two supporters of the first rank as regards quickness of intellect and mental grasp, while the two women had long since been counted among the wittiest great ladies in Paris. To them that evening was like a halt at an oasis; it was a rare enjoyment keenly appreciated by the quartette, who lived in constant dread of the danger signals of society, politics, or drawing-room cliques. Some people are privileged to shine like beneficent stars upon others, giving light to their minds and warmth to their hearts. D'Arthez was one of these finer natures. A man of letters, if he rises to the height of his position, is accustomed to think without restraint, and apt, in society, to forget that everything must not be said; still, as there is almost always a certain originality about his divagations, no one complains of them. It was this savor of originality, so rare in mere cleverness, this simple-minded freshness, that made d'Arthez's character something nobly apart; and in this lay the secret of that delightful evening. D'Arthez came away with the Baron de Rastignac. As they drove home, the latter naturally spoke of the Princess, and asked him what he thought of her.

"No wonder Michel loved her," returned d'Arthez; "she is no ordinary woman."

"A very extraordinary woman," Rastignac returned drily.

"I can tell by the sound of your voice that you are in love with her already. You will call before three days are out; and I am too old a hand in Paris not to know what will pass between you. So, my dear Daniel, I beg you not to fall into any 'confusion of interests.' Love the Princess by all means if you feel that you can love her, but bear your interests in mind. She has never asked or taken two farthings of any man whatsoever; she is far too much a Cadignan or d'Uxelles for that; but to my certain knowledge she has not only squandered a very considerable fortune of her own, she has made others run through millions of francs. How? why? and wherefore? Nobody can tell. She does not know herself. Thirteen years ago I saw her swallow down a charming young fellow's property and an old notary's savings to boot in twenty months."

"Thirteen years ago!" exclaimed d'Arthez; "then how old is she?"

"Why, did you not see her son?" Rastignac retorted, laughing. "That was her son at table—the Duc de Maufrigneuse, a young fellow of nineteen. And nineteen and seventeen make——"

"Thirty-six!" exclaimed the man of letters in amazement; "I took her for twenty."

"She will be quite willing; but you need have no uneasiness on that score, she will never be more than twenty for you. You are setting foot in the most fantastic of worlds.—Good-night. Here you are at home," added Rastignac, as the carriage turned into the Rue de Bellefond, where d'Arthez lived in a neat house of his own. "We shall met at Mlle. des Touches' in the course of the week."

D'Arthez allowed love to invade his heart after the fashion of my Uncle Toby, *videlicet*, without the least attempt at resistance. He proceeded at once to uncritical adoration, admiring the one woman and excluding all others. The Princess, one of the most remarkable portents in Paris, where everything good or evil is possible—the Princess, fair creature, became for him the "angel of his dreams," hackneyed though

the expression may be, now that it has fallen on evil days. A full comprehension of the sudden transformation wrought in the illustrious man of letters is impossible, unless you remember how solitude and continual work leave the heart dormant, and how painful a connection with a vulgar woman may become, when physical cravings give place to love, and love develops new desires and fancies and regrets, and calls forth the diviner impulses of the highest regions of a man's nature. D'Arthez was, indeed, the child, the schoolboy that the Princess at once discerned him to be.

And the beautiful Diane herself received an almost similar illumination. At last she had found a man above other men, the man whom all women desire to find, even if they only mean to play with him; the power that they consent to obey for the sake of gaining control of it. At last she had discovered a great intellect, combined with a boy's heart, and this in the first dawn of passion; and she saw, with happiness undreamed of, that all this wealth was contained in a form that pleased her.

D'Arthez was handsome, she thought. Perhaps he was. He had reached the sober age of maturity; he had led a quiet, regular life that had preserved a certain bloom of youth through his thirty-eight years; and, like statesmen and men of sedentary life generally, had attained a reasonable degree of stoutness. As a very young man he bore a vague resemblance to the portraits of the young Bonaparte; and the likeness was still as strong as it might be between a dark-eyed man with thick brown hair and the Emperor with his blue eyes and chestnut locks. But all the high and burning ambition that once shone in d'Arthez's eyes had been softened, as it were, by success; the thoughts that lay dormant beneath the lad's forehead had blossomed; the hollows in his face had filled up. Prosperity had mellowed the sallow tints that once told of a penurious life and faculties braced to bear the strain of incessant and exhausting toil.

If you look carefully at the finest faces among ancient philosophers, you can always find that those deviations from

the perfect type which give to each face a character of its own are rectified by the habit of meditation, and the continual repose demanded by the intellectual life. The most crabbed visage among them—that of Socrates, for instance—acquires a well-nigh divine serenity at last. In the noble simplicity that became d'Arthez's imperial face very well, there was something guileless, something of a child's unconsciousness of itself, and a kindliness that went to the hearts of others. He had none of that politeness in which there is always a tinge of insincerity, none of the art by which the best-bred and most amiable people can assume those qualities which they have not, much to the discomfiture of their late-enlightened dupes. Some sins of omission he might make as a consequence of his isolation; but he never jarred upon others, and a perfume of the wilderness only enhances the gracious urbanity of the great man who lays aside his greatness to descend to the social level, and, like Henri IV., will either lend a hand in children's games or lend his wit to fools.

If d'Arthez made no attempt at a defence, the Princess, on her return home, did not open the question again with herself. There was no more to be said, so far as she was concerned; with all her knowledge, and all her ignorance, she loved. She only asked herself if she deserved such great happiness—what had she done that heaven should send such an angel to her? She would be worthy of his love; it should last; it should be hers for ever; the last years of youth and waning beauty should be sweet in the paradise that she saw by glimpses. As for resisting it, as for haggling over herself, or coquetting with her lover, she did not even think of it. Her thoughts were of something quite different. She understood the greatness of genius; she felt instinctively that genius is not apt to apply the ordinary rules to a woman of a thousand. So after a rapid forecast, such as none but great feminine natures can make, she vowed to herself to surrender at the first summons. Her estimate of d'Arthez's character, based on a single interview, led her to suspect that there would

be time to make what she wished of herself, to be what she meant to be in the eyes of this sublime lover, before that summons would be made.

And herewith begins an obscure comedy, played on the stage of the inner consciousness of a man and woman, each to be duped by the other. *Tartuffe* is the merest trifle compared with such inscrutable comedies as this; they enlarge the borders of the depravity of human nature; they lie beyond the domain of dramatic art. Extraordinary as they are throughout, they are natural, conceivable, justified by necessity. Such a comedy is a horrible kind of drama, which should be entitled the seamy side of vice.

The Princess began by sending for d'Arthez's books. She had not read a single word of them, but nevertheless she had kept up a flattering conversation on the subject for twenty minutes without making a single slip. She proceeded to read them through, and then tried to compare his work with that of the best contemporary writers. The result was a fit of mental indigestion on the day of d'Arthez's visit. Every day that week she had dressed with unusual care; her toilette expressed an idea for the eyes to accept, without knowing how or wherefore. So she appeared in a combination of soft shades of gray; a listless, graceful half-mourning, an appropriate costume for a woman who felt weary of life, and had nothing left to bind her to life save a few natural ties (her son perhaps). Hers, apparently, was an elegant disgust that stopped short, however, of suicide; she was finishing her allotted time in the earthly prison-house.

She received d'Arthez as though she expected his visit, and had seen him at her house a hundred times, doing him the honor of treating him as an old acquaintance. The conversation began in the most commonplace way. They talked of the weather, of the Cabinet, of de Marsay's bad health, of the hopes of the Legitimist party. D'Arthez was an Absolutist. The Princess could not but know the opinions of a man who sat among the fifteen or twenty Legitimist members

of the Chamber of Deputies; so she took occasion to tell the story of the trick she had played de Marsay; she touched on the Prince's devotion to the Royal family and to Madame; and thence, by an easy transition, brought d'Arthez's attention to the Prince de Cadignan.

"There is this at least to be said for him, he is an attached and devoted servant of His Majesty," said she. "His public character consoles me for all that I have suffered from his private life. But," she continued, adroitly leaving the Prince on one side, "have you not noticed (for nothing escapes you) that men have two sides to their characters? One side they show at home, to their wives; it is their true character that appears in private life; the mask is taken off, dissimulation is at an end; they do not trouble to seem other than they are; they are themselves—often they are horrible. They are great, noble, and generous for the rest of the world, for the King, and the Court, and the salons; they wear a costume embroidered with virtues and bedizened with fine language; they possess exquisite qualities in abundance. What a shocking farce it is! And yet there are people that wonder at the smile some women wear, at their air of superiority over their husbands, their indifference——"

She broke off, but allowed her hand to drop till it rested on the arm of her chair, a gesture that rounded off her discourse to admiration. D'Arthez's eyes were intent upon her lissome figure, upon the lines so gracefully carved against the silken depths of her easy-chair; upon the movements of her dress; upon a certain fascinating little wrinkle that played up and down over her bust, a daring device which only suits a waist so slender that it has nothing to lose by it. The Princess, watching him, took up the order of her thoughts, as though she were speaking to herself.

"I will say no more," she said. "For as for women that give themselves out for 'misunderstood,' and victims of ill-assorted unions who take themselves dramatically and pose as interesting persons—that kind of thing seems to me hopelessly vulgar, and you authors have ended by making such

women very ridiculous. One must either submit, and there is no more to be said, or one resists and finds amusement. In either case a woman should keep silence. It is true that I could not make up my mind to do either, but that is so much the more reason, perhaps, for keeping silence now. How silly it is to complain! If a woman is not equal to the circumstances, if she fails in tact, or sense, or subtlety, she deserves her fate. Are not women queens in France? They play with you when they choose, as they choose, and for as long as they choose."

She swung her scent-bottle, with a marvelous blending of feminine insolence and mocking gaiety in her gesture.

"I have often heard contemptible little creatures regret that they were women," she continued; "and I always felt sorry for them. If I had the choice, I would be a woman over again. Ah! the pleasure and pride of owing your triumphs to strength, to all the power put in your hands by laws of your own framing! And when we see you at our feet, doing and saying foolish things for our sakes, is it not intoxicating joy to feel that the woman's weakness triumphs? So, when we succeed, we are bound to keep silence under penalty of losing our ascendency. And after a defeat, a woman's pride bids her be silent. The slave's silence dismays the master."

While this prattle was piped forth in those winning tones of gentle derision, with an accompaniment of little dainty turns of the head, d'Arthez was spellbound, just as a partridge is fascinated by the sportsman's dog. This kind of woman was something quite new in his experience.

"Tell me, madame, I beg of you, how any man could have made you suffer; be sure that where other women would be vulgar, you would be distinguished, even if you had not a manner of saying things that would make a cookery-book interesting."

"You are going far in friendship," she said, so gravely, that d'Arthez grew serious and uneasy.

She changed the subject. It grew late. The man of

genius, poor fellow, went away in a contrite frame of mind; he had seemed inquisitive; he had hurt her feelings; and he was convinced that she had suffered as few women suffer. Diane had spent her life in amusing herself; she was neither more nor less than a feminine Don Juan, with this difference —if she had tempted the stone statue it would not have been with an invitation to supper, and she certainly would not have had the worst of the encounter.

It is impossible to continue this history without a word as to the Prince de Cadignan (better known as the Duc de Maufrigneuse), or the whole salt and savor of the Princess' miraculous inventions will be lost upon the reader. An outsider could never understand the atrocity of the comedy which the lady has been playing for the benefit of a man of letters. In person M. le Duc de Maufrigneuse, like his father the Prince de Cadignan, was tall and spare; he was a complete fine gentleman, his urbanity never deserted him; he made charming speeches; he became a colonel by the grace of God, and a good soldier by accident. In other respects the Prince was as brave as a Pole, showed his valor on all occasions without discrimination, and used the jargon of Court circles to hide his mental vacuity. Ever since he attained the age of thirty-six he had been perforce as indifferent to the sex as his royal master King Charles X.; for, like his master, he had found too much favor with the fair in his youth, and now was paying the penalty. He had been the idol of the Faubourg Saint-Germain for eighteen years, during which time he led the dissipated, pleasure-filled life of an eldest son.

The Revolution had ruined his father; and though after the Restoration the late Prince had recovered his post, the governorship of a royal castle, with a salary and divers pensions, he had kept up the state of a *grand seigneur* of old days, and squandered his fortune during the brief gleam of prosperity to such purpose, that all the sums repaid him by the law of indemnity went in a display of luxury in his immense old mansion. It was the only piece of property left

to him, and the greater part of it was occupied by his daughter-in-law. The old Prince de Cadignan died at the ripe age of eighty-seven, some years before the Revolution of July. He had ruined his wife, and for a long time there had been something like a coolness between him and his son-in-law, the Duc de Navarreins; the Duke's first wife had been a Cadignan, and the accounts of the trust of her fortune had never been satisfactorily settled.

The present Prince (then the Duc de Maufrigneuse) had had a *liaison* with the Duchesse d'Uxelles. Towards 1814, when the Duke reached his thirty-sixth year, the Duchess, seeing that he was poor but stood very well at Court, gave him her daughter with a rent-roll of fifty or sixty thousand livres, to say nothing of expectations. In this way Mlle. d'Uxelles became a duchess, her mother knowing that in all probability the newly married wife would be allowed great liberty. An heir was born, after which unexpected piece of good fortune the Duke left his wife complete freedom of action, amused himself by going from garrison to garrison, spent the winters in Paris, contracted debts which his father paid, and professed the most complete indifference for his wife. He always gave the Duchess a week's warning before returning to Paris. Adored by his regiment, in high favor with the Dauphin, an adroit courtier, and something of a gambler, there was no sort of affectation about the Duc de Maufrigneuse; the Duchess never could persuade him to take up an Opéra girl, out of regard for appearances and consideration for her, as she pleasantly said. The Duke succeeded to his father's post at Court, and contrived to please both Louis XVIII. and Charles X., which shows that he understood how to turn a colorless character to a tolerable good account; and besides, his life and behavior were covered over by the most elegant veneer. In language and fine manners he was a perfect model; he was popular even among Liberals. The Cadignans, according to the Prince his father, were famous for ruining their wives; in this respect, however, he found it impossible to keep up the family tradi-

tion, the Duchess was running through her fortune too quickly for him.

These little details of the family history were public property at Court and in the Faubourg Saint-Germain; so much so, in fact, that if any one had begun to discuss them, he would have been met with a smile. A man might as well have announced the capture of Holland by the Dutch. No woman ever mentioned the "charming Duke" without a word of praise. His conduct towards his wife had been perfect; it was not a small thing for a man to behave himself as well as Maufrigneuse had done, he had left the Duchess' fortune entirely at her disposal; he had given her his support and countenance on every occasion. And indeed, from pride, or good nature, or from some chivalrous feeling, M. de Maufrigneuse had many a time come to the Duchess' rescue; any other woman would have gone under, in spite of her connections, in spite of the combined credit of the old Duchesse d'Uxelles, the Duc de Navarreins, the old Prince de Cadignan, and her husband's aunt. The present Prince is allowed to be one of the true nobles among the noblesse. And perhaps, if a courtier is faithful at need, he has won the finest of all victories over himself.

The Duchesse d'Uxelles was a woman of five-and-forty when she married her daughter to the Duc de Maufrigneuse, and therefore she saw her old friend's success not merely without jealousy, but with interest. At the time of the marriage she had showed herself a great lady and saved the situation; though she could not prevent scoffing on the part of spiteful persons at Court, who said that the Duchess' noble conduct cost her no great effort, albeit she had given the past five years to repentance and devotion, after the manner of women who stand in great need of forgiveness.

To return to Diane de Cadignan. The extent of the knowledge of literature which she displayed grew more and more remarkable day by day. She could venture with the utmost boldness upon the most abstruse questions, thanks to

studies daily and nightly pursued with an intrepidity worthy of all praise. D'Arthez was bewildered. He was incapable of suspecting that Diane, like a good many writers, repeated at night what she read of a morning. He took her for a woman of no ordinary power. In the course of these conversations they wandered further and further from the end that Diane had in view; she tried to return to the ground of confidential talk, but it was not very easy to bring a man of d'Arthez's temper back to a subject after he had once been warned from it. However, after a month of excursions into literature and beautiful Platonic discourses, d'Arthez grew bolder, and came every day at three o'clock. At six he took leave, only to return three hours later to stay till midnight or one o'clock in the morning. This with the regularity of an impatient lover; and the Princess, on her side, was always more or less carefully dressed at his hours. The tryst thus kept daily, the pains that they both took with themselves, their whole proceedings, in fact, expressed the feelings to which neither of them dared to confess; and the Princess divined in some marvelous way that the grown child dreaded the coming contest as much as she herself longed for it. And yet d'Arthez's manner was a constant declaration of love—a declaration made with a respect which was inexpressibly pleasant to the Princess. Every day they felt so much the more closely drawn together, because there was no convention, no sharp line of difference to arrest the progress of their ideas; no barrier was raised, as frequently happens between lovers, by formal demands on the one side, and coquettish or sincere demurs upon the other. Like most men whose youth lasts on until middle age, d'Arthez was consumed by a poignant irresolution caused by vehement desires on the one hand, and the dread of incurring his mistress' displeasure on the other. A young woman understands nothing of all this while she shares the emotion, but the Princess was too experienced not to linger over its delights. So Diane enjoyed to the full the delicious child's-play of love, finding all the more charm in it because she knew so well how to put an

end to it. She was like a great artist, dwelling complacently on the vague outlines of a sketch, sure of the coming hour of inspiration that shall shape a masterpiece out of an idea that floats as yet in the limbo of things unborn. How many a time, as she saw that d'Arthez was ready to advance, she amused herself by checking him with her queenly air. She could control the tempest in the man's boyish heart, she could raise the storm and still it again, by a glance, by giving him her hand to kiss, by some commonplace word uttered in a soft, tremulous voice.

This policy of hers had been coolly resolved upon, and she acted it out divinely, gradually deepening the lines of the image engraven upon the heart of a clever man of letters of whom it pleased her to make a child. With her he was trustful, open, almost simple; and yet at times something like a reaction would set in, and she could not but admire the man's greatness, blended with such innocence. The arch-coquette's play was binding her at unawares to her bond-slave. At length Diane grew impatient with her love-sick Epictetus; and as soon as she felt that he was disposed to put a blind faith in her, she set herself to tie a thick bandage over his eyes.

One evening Daniel found the Princess in a pensive mood. She was sitting with one elbow on the table, her bright golden head bathed in the lamplight, while she played with a letter, absently tapping it upon the tablecloth. When d'Arthez had been allowed a full view of the letter, she folded it and thrust it into her belt.

"What is the matter?" asked d'Arthez. "You look troubled."

"I have heard from M. de Cadignan," she replied. "Deeply as he has wronged me, I have been thinking, since I read this letter, that he is an exile, and alone; he is fond of his son, and his son is away from him."

Her soul seemed to vibrate through her voice; to d'Arthez it was a revelation of a divine sensitiveness to another's pain. It touched him to the quick. His lover's eagerness to read

her became, as it were, a piece of curious literary and scientific inquiry. If he could only know the height of her woman's greatness; the full extent of the injuries forgiven; and learn how near the angels a woman of the world may rise while others accuse her of frivolity and selfishness and hardness of heart! Then he remembered that once before he had sought to know this angel's heart, and how he had been repulsed. He took the slender transparent hand with its taper fingers in his, and said, with something like a tremor in his voice, "Are we friends enough now for you to tell me what you have suffered? Old troubles must count for something in your musings."

"Yes," said the fair Diane, prolonging the one syllable; Tulou's flute never sighed forth a sweeter sound. Then she drifted again into musings, her eyes clouded over; and as Daniel waited in anxious suspense, the solemnity of the moment penetrated his being. His poet's imagination beheld the cloud veiling the sanctuary; slowly the obscurity would clear away, and he should behold the wounded lamb lying at the feet of God.

"Well?" he said softly and quietly.

Diane looked into his face with its look of tender entreaty, then her eyes fell slowly, and the lashes drooped; the movement was a revelation of the noblest delicacy. A man must have been a monster to imagine that there could be a taint of hypocrisy in the graceful curve of the throat, as Diane raised her little dainty head to send a glance into the very depths of those hungry eyes.

"Can I? and ought I?" she began, with a certain hesitation, and her face wore a sublime expression of dreamy tenderness as she gazed at d'Arthez. "Men keep faith so little in such things. They feel so little bound to secrecy."

"Ah! but if you cannot trust me, why am I here?" he cried.

"Ah! my friend, does a woman calculate when she binds herself to a friendship for life?" answered Diane, and there was all the charm of an involuntary confession about her

words. "It is not a question of refusing you (what can I refuse to you?); but what would you think of me if I should speak? Willingly I would tell you of my position, a strange one at my age; but what would you think of a wife who should lay bare the wounds dealt to her by her own husband, and betray the secrets of another? Turenne kept his word with thieves; ought I not to show the honor of a Turenne towards those who tortured me?"

"Have you given your word to any one?"

"M. de Cadignan thought it unnecessary to ask for secrecy. So you would have more of me than myself? Ah! tyrant, am I to bury my honesty in you?" and her glance made the pretended confidence seem something greater than the gift of her person.

"You rate me rather too low if you can fear any wrong whatsoever from me," he said with ill-disguised bitterness.

"Forgive me, my friend," she said. She took his hand in hers, caressing it with a most loving soft touch of her fingers. "I know all your worth. You have told me the story of your life; it is a noble, a beautiful story; it is sublime, it is worthy of your name; perhaps you think I owe you mine in return? But at this very moment I am afraid of lowering myself in your eyes by telling secrets that are not mine only. And, poet and lonely thinker as you are, perhaps you may not believe in the horrors of worldly life. Oh! when you invent your tragedies, you little know what tragedies are going on in many an apparently closely united family! You do not imagine the extent of the wretchedness beneath the gilding."

"I know all," he cried.

"No, nothing," she answered. "Ought a daughter to betray her mother?"

At these words of hers, d'Arthez felt as if he had lost his way in darkness among the Alps, and found, with the first glimpse of dawn, that he stood on the very edge of a bottomless precipice. He looked with dazed eyes at the Princess, and a cold chill crept over him. For a moment Diane thought that the man of genius was a weakling; but a flash in his eyes reassured her

"And now, you are almost like a judge for me," she said despairingly. "And I may speak, for every slandered creature has a right to prove its innocence. I have been, nay—if any one remembers a poor recluse, a woman forced by the world to renounce the world—I am still accused of such light conduct, of so many sins, that I may be forgiven for putting myself in the true light for the heart in which I find a refuge from which I shall not be driven forth. It has always seemed to me that self-justification tells heavily against innocence; for that reason I have always scorned to defend myself; to whom, indeed, could I speak? Painful things like these can only be confided to God, or to some one very near Him, to a priest or to a second self. Ah, well, if my secrets are not there," she added, laying a hand on d'Arthez's breast, "as they are here" (bending the busk of her corset with her fingers), "you cannot be the great d'Arthez, and I have been mistaken in you."

D'Arthez's eyes filled, and Diane drank in those tears; she gave him a sidelong glance with steady eyes and unquivering eyelids. It was as deft and neat as a cat's spring on a mouse. Then, for the first time, after sixty days of protocols, d'Arthez took the warm, moist hand, carried it to his lips, and set a kiss upon it—a slow, long kiss, drawn from the wrist to the finger-tips, taken with such delicate rapture that the Princess, bending her head, augured very well of literature. In her opinion, men of genius ought to love more perfectly than men of the world, coxcombs, diplomates, or even military men, though these certainly have nothing else to do. Diane had had experience. She knew that a man's character as a lover is revealed by very small signs and tokens. If a woman is learned in this lore, she can tell from a mere gesture what she has to expect; much as Cuvier could examine a fragment of a fossil foot, and say, "This belonged to an animal that lived so many thousand years ago; its habit was amphibious, carnivorous, herbivorous, or what not; it had or had not horns, and so forth." She felt sure that the imagination which d'Arthez put into his literary style would show itself in his

love; so she held it expedient to bring him to the highest degree of passion and belief in her. She drew her hand back at once, with a magnificent gesture fraught with emotion. If she had said in words, "No more of that, you will kill me!" she could not have spoken more forcibly. For a moment her eyes rested upon his; joy and fear and prudery and confidence and languor; a vague longing and something of a maiden's shyness were mingled in their expression. For that moment she was a girl of twenty. She had prepared, you may be sure, for that hour's comedy; never had woman dressed herself with such art; and now, as she sat in her great chair, she looked like a flower ready to open out at the first kiss of the sun. Real or artificial, whichever she was, she intoxicated Daniel.

And here, if it is permissible to hazard a personal opinion, let us confess that it would be delightful to be thus deceived for as long as possible. Talma on the stage certainly rose far above nature many a time; but is not the Princesse de Cadignan the greatest actress of our day? Nothing was wanting to her save an attentive audience. But, unfortunately, women disappear in stormy epochs; they are like water-lilies, they must have a cloudless sky and the softest of warm breezes if they are to blossom and spread themselves before our enchanted eyes.

The hour had come. Diane was about to entangle a great man in the inextricable toils of a romance that had long been growing; and he was to listen to it as a catechumen might have listened to an epistle from one of the apostles in the palmy days of the Christian Church.

"My mother, who is still living at Uxelles, married me in 1814 to M. de Maufrigneuse when I was seventeen years old (you see, my friend, how old I am). She made the match, not out of love for me, but from love of *him*. He was the only man she had ever cared for; so she repaid him in this way for all the happiness that he had given her. Oh! do not be shocked by the ugly combination; it is a thing that often happens. Some women put their lover before their children

just as most women are mothers rather than wives. The two instincts of wifely love and motherhood, developed as they are by social conditions, often come into conflict in a woman's heart. One of them must necessarily supplant the other unless both kinds of love are equally strong, as sometimes happens with an extraordinary woman, the glory of our sex. A man of your genius surely will understand these things; fools wonder at them, yet they are none the less founded in nature. I will go further, they are justifiable by differences in character, temperament, situation, and the nature of the attachment. If I myself, for instance, at this moment,—after twenty years of misfortune, and disappointment, and heavy trials, and hollow pleasures, and slander which I could not refute—if I were offered a true and lasting love, might I not feel ready to fling myself at the feet of the man who offered it? If I did, would not the world condemn me? And yet, surely twenty years of wretchedness ought to buy absolution for twelve years given to a pure and hallowed love—the twelve years of life that remain before I fade? But it will not be; I am not foolish enough to diminish my merits in the eyes of God. I have borne the burden and heat of the day until evening; I will finish my day; I shall have earned my reward——"

"What an angel!" thought d'Arthez.

"In short, though the Duchesse d'Uxelles cared more for M. de Maufrigneuse than for the poor Diane whom you see before you, I have never borne her a grudge. My mother had scarcely seen me; she had forgotten me; but her behavior to me, as between woman and woman, was bad; and what is bad between woman and woman becomes hateful between mother and daughter. Mothers that lead such a life as the Duchesse d'Uxelles led keep their daughters at a distance. I only 'came out' a fortnight before my marriage. Judge of my innocence! I knew nothing; I was incapable of guessing the motives that brought the match about. I had a fine fortune—sixty thousand livres a year from forests, which they either could not sell or had forgotten to sell during the Revo-

lution, and the château d'Anzy in the Nivernais to which the forest belonged. M. de Maufrigneuse was burdened with debts. If I afterwards came to understand what debts meant, at the time of my marriage I was too completely ignorant of life to suspect the significance of the word. The accumulated interest of my fortune went to pacify my husband's creditors.

"M. de Maufrigneuse was thirty-eight years old when I was married to him; but those years were like a soldier's campaigns; they should count double. Oh, he was far more than seventy-six years old. My mother at the age of forty had still some pretensions to beauty; and I found that I was between jealousy on either side. What a life I led for the next ten years! . . . Ah! if people but knew how the poor, much-suspected young wife suffered! To be watched by a mother who was jealous of her own daughter! Ah, God! . . . You writers of tragedies will never invent a drama so dark and so cruel! I think, from the little I know of literature, that a play as a rule is a series of events, conversations, and actions which lead to the catastrophe; but this thing of which I am speaking to you is a most dreadful catastrophe without end. It is as if the avalanche that fell this morning should fall again at night—and yet again next morning. A cold shudder runs through me while I speak of it, while I light up the cavern from which there was no escape, the cold, gloomy place where I used to live. If you must know all, the birth of my child—altogether mine, indeed, for you must surely have been struck by his likeness to me?—he has my hair, my eyes, the outline of my face, my mouth, my smile, my chin, my teeth—well, my child's birth was due either to chance or to some agreement between my mother and my husband. For long after my marriage I was still a girl; I was abandoned, so to speak, directly afterwards; I was a mother, but a girl still. The Duchess was pleased to prolong the period of ignorance, and to attain this end a mother has horrible advantages. As for me, a poor, little creature brought up like a mystic rose

in a convent, I knew nothing of married life, I developed late, and felt very happy; I rejoiced over the good understanding and the harmony that prevailed in the family. I did not care much for my husband, and he took no pains to please me; and at length my thoughts were altogether diverted from me by the first joys of motherhood, joys the more keenly felt because I had no suspicion that there could be any others. So much had been dinned into my ears about the respect that a mother owed herself! And besides, a girl always loves to 'play at mamma.' At that age a child is as good as a doll. I was so proud too to have that lovely flower, for Georges was a lovely child—a wonder! How could one think of society while one had the pleasure of nursing and tending a little angel? I adore little children while they are quite little and pink and white. So I saw no one but my baby; I lived with him; I would not allow his nurse to dress or undress him or to change his clothes. The little cares that grow so wearisome to the mother of a regiment of babes were all pure pleasure to me. But after three or four years, as I am not altogether a fool, the light broke in upon me in spite of all the pains they took to bandage my eyes. Can you imagine me when the awakening came, four years afterwards, in 1819. *Deux Frères ennemis* is a rose-water tragedy compared with the dramatic situation in which the Duchess and I, mother and daughter, were placed with regard to each other. Then I defied both her and my husband, by flirting publicly in a way that made people talk. Heaven knows what they did not say. You can understand, my friend, that the men with whom I was accused of light conduct were simply daggers that I used to defend myself against the enemy. My thoughts were so full of revenge that I did not feel the wounds that I dealt myself. I was innocent as a child; people looked upon me as a depraved woman, one of the worst of women. I knew nothing of this.

"The world is very stupid, very ignorant, very blind. People only penetrate into the secrets that interest them and serve their spite; but when the greatest and nobles things are to

be seen, they put their hands before their eyes. And yet, it seems to me that the pride that thrilled through me and shook me in those days, the indignant innocence in my expression and attitudes, would have been a godsend to a great painter. The tempest of anger in me must have flashed like lightning through a ballroom; my disdain must have poured out like a flood. It was wasted passion. Nothing save the indignation of twenty years can rise to such sublime tragic heights. As we grow older we cannot feel indignant, we are tired; evil is not a surprise; we grow cowardly, we are afraid. As for me, I made fine progress. I acted like the veriest fool; I bore the blame of wrongdoing, and had none of the pleasure. I enjoyed compromising myself. I played child's tricks.

"I went to Italy with a hare-brained boy; he made love to me, and I threw him over; but when I found out that he had got himself into a scrape on my account (he had forged a bill), I hurried to the rescue. My mother and my husband, who knew the secret of it all, kept a tight hand over me as an extravagant wife. Oh! that time I went to the King. Louis XVIII., though he had no heart, was touched. He gave me a hundred thousand francs out of the privy purse. The Marquis d'Esgrignon (you may perhaps have met him in society, he married a very rich heiress afterwards), the Marquis d'Esgrignon was rescued from the depths into which he plunged for me. This adventure, brought about by my heedlessness, made me reflect. I saw then that I was the first to suffer from my revenge. My mother and husband and father-in-law had every one on their side; they stood to all appearance between me and the consequences of my recklessness. My mother knew that I was far too proud, too great, too truly a d'Uxelles, to do anything commonplace; about this time she grew frightened by the mischief she had done. She was fifty-two years old. She left Paris and went to live at d'Uxelles. Now she repents of her sins towards me, and expiates them by the most extravagant devotion and boundless love. But in 1823 she left me alone, face to face with M. de Maufrigneuse.

"Oh, my friend, you men cannot know what an elderly man of pleasure is; nor what a house is like when a man is accustomed to have women of the world burning incense before him, and finds neither censer nor perfumes at home; when he is dead to everything, and jealous for that very reason. When M. de Maufrigneuse was mine alone, I tried, I tried to be a good wife; but I came into conflict with the asperities of a morose temper, with all the fancies of an effete voluptuary; the driveling puerilities, the vain self-sufficiency of a man who was, to tell truth, the most tedious, maundering grumbler in the world. He treated me like a little girl; it gave him pleasure to humiliate me on every occasion, to crush me with the bludgeon of his experience, and to show me how completely ignorant I was. He mortified me at every moment. He did everything, in fact, to make himself detestable and to give me a right to deceive him; but for three or four years I was the dupe of my own heart and my desire to do right. Do you know what a shameful speech it was that urged me to fresh recklessness? Could you imagine the supreme lengths to which slander is carried in society?—'The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse has gone back to her husband,' people said.—'Pooh! out of sheer depravity; it is a triumph to quicken the dead, nothing else remains for her to do,' replied my best friend, a relative at whose house I had the pleasure of meeting you."

"Mme. d'Espard!" exclaimed Daniel, aghast.

"Oh, I have forgiven her, my friend. The speech was extremely clever, to go no further, and I may perhaps have said more cruel things of other unhappy women who were quite as pure as I was."

Again d'Arthez kissed her hands. The sainted woman had chopped her mother to pieces and served her up to him; the Prince de Cadignan, whose acquaintance we have previously made, had been put forward as an Othello of the blackest dye; and now she was acknowledging her faults and scourging herself vigorously—all to assume, for the eyes of this guileless man of letters, that virgin estate which the simplest woman tries at all costs to offer to her lover.

"You can understand, my friend, that when I went back into the world, it was to make a sensation, and I intended to make a sensation. There were fresh struggles to be gone through; I had to gain independence and to counteract M. de Maufrigneuse. So I began a life of dissipation for new reasons. I tried to forget myself, I tried to forget real life in a life of dreams; I shone in society, I entertained; I was a Princess, and I got into debt. At home I found forgetfulness in sleep. Beautiful, high-spirited, and reckless, I began a new life in the world; but in the weary struggle between dreams and reality, I ran through my fortune.

"The revolt of 1830 came just as this chapter out of the *Arabian Nights* drew to an end; and just at that time I found the pure and sacred love which I longed to know. (I am frank with you!) It was not unnatural (admit) that when a woman's heart had been repressed again and again by fate, it should awaken at last at the age when a woman sees that she has been cheated of her due? I saw that so many women about me were happy through love. Oh! why was Michel Chrestien so much in awe of me? There again is another irony in my life. There was no help for it. When the crash came I had lost everything; I had not a single illusion left; I had pressed out the last drops of all experience, but of one fruit I had not tasted, and I had neither taste nor teeth left for it. In short, by the time I was obliged to leave the world I was disenchanted. There was something providential in this, as in the insensibility that prepares us for death," she added, with a gesture full of religious unction.

"Everything that happened just then helped me," she continued; "the downfall and ruin of the Monarchy buried me out of sight. My son makes up to me for a great deal. Motherhood compensates us for all our thwarted powers of loving. People are astonished by my retreat, but I have found happiness. Oh!. if you but knew how happy the poor creature before you has grown. The joys which I have not known, and shall never know, are all forgotten in the joy of sacrificing myself for my son's sake. Who could think that

life, for the Princesse de Cadignan, would be summed up by a wretched marriage-night, the adventures with which she is credited, and a childish defiance of two dark passions? Nobody could believe it. At this day I am afraid of everything. I remember so many delusions and misfortunes that I should be sure to repulse genuine feeling, and pure love for love's sake; just as rich men repulse the deserving poor because some hypocritical knave has disgusted them with charity. All this is horrible, is it not? But, believe me, this that I have told you is the history of many another woman."

The last words were spoken in light jesting tones, which recalled the flippant woman of fashion. D'Arthez was dazed. The convict sent to the hulks for robbery and murder with aggravating circumstances, or for forging a signature on a bill, was in his eyes a saintly innocent compared with men and women of the world. The atrocious jeremiad had been forged in the arsenal of falsehood, and dipped in the waters of the Parisian Styx; there was an unmistakable ring of truth in the Duchess' tones. D'Arthez gazed at her for a while; and she (adorable woman) lay in the depths of her great chair, her white hands resting on the arms like drops of dew at the edge of a flower-petal. She was overcome by her own revelations; she seemed to have lived again through all her past sorrows as she spoke of them, and now sank exhausted. She was an angel of melancholy in fact.

Suddenly she sat upright, and raised her hand, while lightnings blazed in the eyes that were supposed to be purified by twenty years of chastity. "Judge of the impression that your friend's love must have made on me!" she cried, "but by the savage irony of fate—or was it God's irony?—he died; he died when (I confess it) I was so thirsty for love that if a man had been worthy of me, he would have found me weak; he died to save the life of another, and that other was—who but M. de Cadignan? Are you surprised to find me pensive?"

It was the last stroke. Poor d'Arthez could bear no more. He fell on his knees before her, he hid his face in her hands,

and his tears fell fast—happy tears, such as angels might shed, if angels weep. And since Daniel's face was hidden, Mme. de Cadignan could allow a mischievous smile of triumph to steal across her mouth, a smile such as monkeys might summon up over a piece of superlative mischief, if monkeys laugh.

"Aha! I have him fast!" thought she.

And true enough, she had him fast.

"Then you are——" he began, raising that fine head of his to gaze lovingly into her eyes.

"Virgin and martyr," she finished his sentence for him, smiling at the commonplace phrase, but her cruel smile lent an enchanting significance to the words. "I laugh," she said, "because I am thinking of the Princess as the world knows her, of that Duchesse de Maufrigneuse to whom the world assigns de Marsay as a lover; and the villainous political bravo, de Trailles; and empty-headed little d'Esgrignon, and Rastignac, and Rubempré, and ambassadors and Cabinet ministers and Russian generals,—and all Europe, for anything I know. There has been much gossip about this album that I have made; people believe that all my admirers were my lovers. Oh! it is shocking! I cannot think how I can suffer a man at my feet; I ought to despise them all; that should be my creed."

She rose and stood in the window; her manner of going was full of magnificent suggestion.

D'Arthez stayed on the hearth-stool where he had been sitting. He did not dare to follow the Princess, but he gazed at her, he heard her use her handkerchief. It was a pure matter of form; what is a princess that blows her nose? Diane tried to do the impossible to confirm d'Arthez's belief in her sensibility. His angel was in tears! He flew to her, put his arm about her waist, and held her tightly to him.

"No, no, leave me," she murmured faintly. "I have too many doubts to be good for anything. The task of reconciling me with life is beyond a man's strength."

"Diane! I will give you love for all the life that you have lost!"

"No, do not talk to me like that," she answered. "I feel guilty; I am trembling at this moment as if I had committed the worst of sins."

Diane had recovered a little maid's innocence, yet nevertheless she stood before him august and great and noble as a queen. It was a clever manœuvre, so clever that she had wheeled round from seeming, and reached the actual truth; and as for d'Arthez, no words will describe the effect produced by it upon his inexperience and open nature. Great man of letters as he was, he stood dumb with admiration, a passive spectator waiting for a word, while the Princess waited for a kiss. But she had grown too sacred to him for that. Diane felt cold in the window; her feet were freezing; she went back to her old position in the chair.

"He will be a long while about it," thought she, looking at Daniel with a proud forehead and face sublime with virtue.

"Is she a woman?" the profound observer of human nature was asking of himself. "How should one act with her?"

They spent their time till two o'clock in the morning in the fond, foolish talk that such women as the Princess can turn into adorable discourse. She was too old, she said, too faded, too much of a wreck; d'Arthez proved to her that she had the most delicate, soft, and fragrant skin; delicious to touch, and white and fair to see, of which things she was fully convinced in her own mind. She was young; she was in her flower. Her beauty was disputed, charm by charm, detail by detail, with—"Do you think so?—You are raving!—This is desire.—In a fortnight you will see me as I am.—In truth, I am verging on forty; how should any one love a woman of my age?"

D'Arthez was impetuous as a schoolboy, his eloquence was sown thickly with the most extravagant words. And the Princess, listening, laughed within herself, while she heard the ingenious writer talking like a love-sick sub-lieutenant, and seemed to drink in the nonsense, and to be quite touched by it.

Out in the street d'Arthez asked himself whether he ought

not to have been less in awe of her. As he went through the strange confidences that had been made to him—naturally, they have been much abridged and condensed here, for the mellifluous utterances given in full, with their appropriate commentary of expression and gesture, would fill a volume—as he looked through his memory, the plausibility of the romance, the depths below the surface, and the Princess' tones, all combined to foil the retrospective sagacity of an acute but straightforward man.

"It is true," he told himself as he lay wide awake, "it is true that there are tragedies in society. Society hides such horrors as this beneath the flowers of delicate luxury, the embellishments of scandal, and the sparkle of anecdotes. We cannot imagine anything that has not happened. Poor Diane! Michel caught a glimpse of the enigma when he told us that there were volcanic fires under the ice! And Bianchon and Rastignac are right too. When a man can find his high ideals and the intoxication of desire both blended in the love of a woman—a woman of quick intelligence and refinement and dainty ways—it must surely be unspeakable bliss."

He tried to fathom the love in his heart, and found no limits.

Towards two o'clock next day, Mme. d'Espard called on the Princess. An intense curiosity brought her. For more than a month she had neither seen her friend nor received a single tell-tale word. Nothing could be more amusing than the first half-hour of the conversation between two daughters of Eve endowed with the wisdom of the serpent. Diane de Cadignan shunned the subject of d'Arthez as she would avoid a yellow dress. And the Marquise wheeled about the question as a Bedouin Arab might hover about a rich caravan. Diane enjoyed the situation; the Marquise grew furious. Diane was watching her opportunity; she meant to turn her dear friend to account as a sporting dog. And one of the two celebrated women was more than a match for the other. The Princess rose a head above the Marquise; and Mme. d'Espard

in her own mind admitted her inferiority. Herein, possibly, lay the secret of the bond between them. The weaker spirit of the two lay low, feigning an attachment, watching for the moment so long looked for by the weak, the chance of springing at the throat of the strong, and leaving the impress of one joyous bite. Diane saw this perfectly well. The rest of the world was completely deceived by the amenities that passed between the two dear friends.

The Princess waited; and as soon as she saw the question rise to her friend's lips, she said, "Well, dear; I owe a great, complete, and boundless happiness to you."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you remember our ruminations three months ago, as we sat out in the garden on the bench under the jessamine in the sun? Ah! well; no one can love like a man of genius. I would willingly say of my great Daniel d'Arthez as Catherine de' Medici said of the Duke of Alva, 'One salmon's head is worth all the frogs' heads in the world.'"

"I am not at all surprised that you do not come to me," said Mme. d'Espard.

"Promise me, my angel, if he goes to see you, not to say a word of me," continued the Princess, as she took the Marquise's hand. "I am happy—oh! happy beyond words—and you know how far an epigram or a jest may go in society. A word can be fatal; some people can put so much poison in a word. If you only knew how I have wished during the past week that you too might find such a passionate love! And, indeed, it is sweet; it is a glorious triumph for us women if we may finish our lives as women thus, with an ardent, pure, complete, whole-hearted, and devoted love to soothe us at last after so long a quest."

"Why ask me to be true to my best friend?" said Mme. d'Espard. "Can you think me capable of playing you a vile trick?"

"When a woman possesses such a treasure, it is so natural to fear to lose it, that the thought of fear occurs to her at once. I am absurd. Forgive me, dear."

A few moments later, the Marquise took leave.

"What a character she will give me!" thought the Princess as she watched her departure. "But I will save her the trouble of tearing Daniel away; I will send him to her at once."

Daniel came in a few minutes afterwards. In the middle of an interesting conversation the Princess suddenly interrupted him, laying her beautiful hand on his arm.

"Forgive me, my friend, but I might forget to mention something; it seems a silly trifle, yet it is a matter of the utmost importance. You have not set foot in Mme. d'Espard's house since that day—a thousand times blessed!—when I met you for the first time. Go to her; not out of politeness, but for my sake. Perhaps she may be offended with me; she may possibly have chanced to hear that you have scarcely left my house, so to speak, since her dinner-party. And besides, my friend, I should not like you to give up your connections and society, nor your work and occupations. I should be more outrageously slandered than ever. What would they not say of me?—'That I am holding you in a leash, that I am monopolizing you, that I am afraid of comparisons, that I want to be talked about even now, and I am taking good care to keep my conquest, for I know that it will be the last'—and so on and so on. Who could guess that you are my one and only friend? If you love me as you tell me you do, you will make people believe that we are to each other as a brother and sister and nothing more.—Go on."

There was an ineffable sweetness in the way in which this charming woman arranged her robes so as to fall gracefully; it always schooled d'Arthez into obedience. A vague, subtle refinement in her discourse touched him even to tears. Other women might haggle and dispute the way inch by inch, in sofa-converse; the Princess rose at once above all ignoble and vulgar bargainings to a height of greatness unknown before. She had no need to utter a word, they understood their union nobly. It should be when they willed it upon either side; there was no yesterday, to-day, or to-morrow for them; there

should be none of the interminable hoisting of the pennon styled "sacrifice" by ordinary women, doubtless because they know how much they are certain to lose, while a woman who has everything to gain knows that the festival will be her day of triumph.

Diane's words had been vague as a promise, sweet as hope, and binding, nevertheless, as a pledge. Let it be admitted at once, the only women who can rise thus high are illustrious and supreme deceivers like Diane; they are queens still when other women find a lord and master. By this time d'Arthez had learned to measure the distance that separates these few from the many. The Princess was always beautiful, never wanting to herself. Perhaps the secret lies in the art with which a great lady can lay veil after veil aside, till in this position she stands like an antique statue. To retain a single shred would be indecent. The bourgeoise always tries to clothe herself.

Broken to the yoke by tenderness, and sustained by the noblest virtues, d'Arthez obediently went to Mme d'Espard's. On him she exerted her most charming coquetry. She was very careful not to mention the Princess' name; she merely asked him to dine with her at an early date.

On that day d'Arthez found a large party invited to meet him. The Marquise had asked Rastignac, Blondet, the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto, Maxime de Trailles, the Marquis d'Esgrignon, the two Vandenesses, du Tillet (one of the richest bankers in Paris), the Baron de Nucingen, Nathan, Lady Dudley, one or two of the wiliest attachés from the embassy, and the Chevalier d'Espard. The Chevalier, be it said, was one of the most astute personages in the room, and counted for a good half in the schemes of his sister-in-law.

Maxime de Trailles turned to d'Arthez.

"You see a good deal of the Princesse de Cadignan, don't you?" he asked, with a laugh.

D'Arthez replied with a stiff inclination of the head. Maxime de Trailles was a bravo of a superior order; he feared neither God nor man; he shrank from nothing. Women had

loved him, he had ruined them, and made them pledge their diamonds to pay his debts; but his shortcomings were covered by a brilliant veneer, by charming manners, and a diabolical cleverness. Everybody feared him, everybody despised him; but nobody was bold enough to treat him with anything short of extreme civility. He could see nothing of all this, or possibly he lent himself to the general dissimulation. De Marsay had helped him to reach the highest elevation that he could attain. De Marsay, having known Maxime from of old, judged him capable of fulfilling certain diplomatic functions in the secret service of which Maxime had, in fact, acquitted himself to admiration. D'Arthez had been mixed up in political affairs for some time past; he knew enough of the man to fathom his character; and he alone, it may be, was sufficiently high minded to say aloud what others thought.

"It is for her, no tout, dat you neklect de Chaimper," put in the Baron de Nucingen.

"Ah! a man could not set foot in the house of a more dangerous woman," the Marquis d'Esgrignon exclaimed, lowering his voice. "My disgraceful marriage is entirely owing to her."

"Dangerous?" repeated Mme. d'Espard. "You must not say such things of my best friend. Anything that I have ever heard or seen of the Princess seemed to me to be prompted by the highest motives."

"Pray, let the Marquis say his say," said Rastignac. "When a man has been thrown by a mettled horse, he will pick faults in the animal and sell it."

The Marquis d'Esgrignon was nettled by the speech. He looked across at Daniel d'Arthez.

"Monsieur is not on such terms with the Princess that we may not speak of her, I hope?"

D'Arthez was silent; and d'Esgrignon, who did not lack wit, retorted to Rastignac with an apologetic portrait of Mme. de Cadignan. His sketch set the table in good-humor; but as d'Arthez was absolutely in the dark, he bent over to Mme. de Montcornet and asked her to explain the joke.

"Well, judging by the good opinion that you have of the Princess, you are an exception; but all the other guests, it would seem, have been in her good graces."

"I can assure you that that view is totally false," returned Daniel.

"Yet here is M. d'Esgrignon, of a noble Perche family, who was utterly ruined for her twelve years ago, and all but went to the scaffold besides."

"I know about it," said d'Arthez. "Mme. de Cadignan rescued M. d'Esgrignon from the Assize Court, and this is how he shows his gratitude to-day."

Mme. de Montcornet stared at d'Arthez; she looked almost dazed with astonishment and curiosity. Then she glanced at Mme. d'Espard, as who should say, "He is bewitched!"

During this short conversation Mme. d'Espard had defended her friend; but her defence, after the manner of a lightning conductor, had drawn down the tempest. When d'Arthez gave his attention to the general conversation, Maxime de Trailles brought out his epigram.

"In Diane's case, depravity is not the effect but the cause: perhaps her exquisite naturalness is due to this; she does not try after studied effects; she invents nothing. She brings you out the most subtle refinements as the sudden inspiration of the most artless love; and you cannot help believing her too."

The phrase might have been prepared for a man of d'Arthez's calibre; it came out with such effect that it was like a conclusion. Nobody said any more of the Princess; she seemed to be disposed of. But d'Arthez looked first at de Trailles and then at d'Esgrignon, with a sarcastic expression.

"She took a leaf out of a man's book, that has been her greatest mistake," he said. "Like a man, she squanders marriage jewels, she sends her lovers to the money-lenders, she ruins orphans, she devours dowries, she melts down old châteaux, she inspires crimes—and perhaps commits them herself—but——"

Never in their lives had either of the two personages addressed heard language so much to the purpose. When d'Arthez came to a pause on that *but,* the whole table was dumfounded; the spectators sat, fork in hand, looking from the intrepid man of letters to the Princess' treacherous enemies. There was an awful pause; they waited to see what would come next.

"*But,*" pursued d'Arthez, with satirical flippancy, "Mme. de Cadignan has this one advantage over men. If any one risks himself for her, she comes to the rescue, and says no ill of any man afterwards. Why should not one woman, among so many, amuse herself with men, as men play with women? Why should not the fair sex take a turn at that game from time to time?——"

"Genius is more than a match for cleverness," said Blondet, addressing Nathan.

And, indeed, d'Arthez's avalanche of epigrams was like a reply from a battery to a discharge of musketry. They hastened to change the subject. Neither the Comte de Trailles nor the Marquis d'Esgrignon felt disposed to try conclusions with d'Arthez. When coffee was served, Blondet and Nathan went over to him with an alacrity which no one cared to imitate, so difficult was it to reconcile admiration of his behavior with the fear of making two powerful enemies.

"We knew before to-day that your character is as great as your talent," said Blondet. "You bore yourself just now not like a man, but rather as a god. Not to be carried away by one's feelings or imagination, not to blunder into taking up arms in the defence of the woman one loves (as people expected you to do), a blunder which would have meant a triumph for these people, for they are consumed with jealousy of celebrated men of letters—ah! permit me to say that this is the supreme height of statecraft in private life."

"You are a statesman," added Nathan. "It is as clever as it is difficult to avenge a woman without defending her."

"The Princess is one of the heroines of the Legitimist party," d'Arthez returned coolly; "surely it is the duty of

every gentleman to champion her on those grounds? Her services to the cause would excuse the most reckless life."

"He will not show his hand," said Nathan to Blondet.

"Just as if the Princess were worth the trouble," added Rastignac, as he joined the group.

D'Arthez went to the Princess. She was waiting for him in an agony of anxiety. She had authorized an experiment which might prove fatal. For the first time in her life she suffered at heart, and a perspiration broke out over her. Others would tell d'Arthez the truth, she had told him lies; if he should believe the truth, she did not know what she should do; for a character so noble, a man so complete, a soul so pure, a conscience so ingenuous, had never passed through her hands before. It was because she longed to know a pure love that she had woven such a tissue of cruel lies. She felt that poignant love in her heart, she loved d'Arthez, and she was condemned to deceive him, for him she must always be the sublime actress who had played this comedy for his benefit. She heard d'Arthez's step in the dining-room with a great agitation; a shock quivered through the very springs of existence. Then she knew that her happiness was at stake; she had never felt such emotion before, yet hers had been a most adventurous life for a woman of her rank. With eyes gazing into space, she saw d'Arthez in one complete vision, saw through the outward form into his inmost soul. Suspicion had not so much as brushed him with her bat's wing! The reaction set in after the terrible throes of fear, and joy almost overcame Diane; for every creature is stronger to bear pain than to stand the extreme of happiness.

"Daniel!" she cried, rising to her feet and holding out her arms, "I have been slandered, and you have avenged me."

Daniel was utterly astounded by the words, for the roots of them lay far down out of his sight. He felt two beautiful hands clasp his face, and the Princess kissed him reverently on the forehead.

"How did you know?——"

"Oh, illustrious simpleton! do you not see that I love you madly?"

From that day there was no more question of the Princesse de Cadignan or of d'Arthez. The Princess has since inherited some property from her mother; she spends her summers with the great man of letters in a villa at Geneva, returning to Paris for a few months during the winter. D'Arthez only shows himself at the Chamber. What is still more significant, he very rarely publishes anything.

Is this the catastrophe of the story? Yes, for those that can understand, but not for people who must have everything told.

LES JARDIES, *June*, 1839.

THE MIDDLE CLASSES

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INTRODUCTION

A MAIN—I should myself be disposed to say *the* main—interest of *Les Petits Bourgeois* arises from the fact that it was not only the last published, except scraps, of Balzac's works, but was actually never included in the various editions of the *Comédie Humaine* till the appearance of the so-called *édition définitive* a few years ago. In the famous collection of five-and-fifty squat volumes in which most people have made acquaintance with him it does not appear, and M. de Lovenjoul himself speaks of it as "too little known." It is supposed to have been, as *Le Député d'Arcis* certainly was, finished by Charles Rabou; but the extent of his contribution does not appear to be known. The critic just referred to thinks that it cannot have been great, because Balzac, some years before his death, speaks of the book as "nearly finished." It is always wise to differ with M. de Lovenjoul extremely cautiously and diffidently, for his knowledge of Balzac is as boundless as his absence of pretension or dictatorship on the subject is remarkable. But I venture to observe that there are several other books of which Balzac at different times speaks as having been far advanced, if not actually ready for publication, yet of which no trace seems to exist even in M. de Lovenjoul's own extensive collection of unprinted "Remains." Still, there can be little doubt that the later parts of *Les Petits Bourgeois* exhibit far less mark of an alien hand than the later parts of the *Député d'Arcis*. And though, if the book was actually finished, or nearly so, by the author himself, it seems strange that he should not have issued it, anxious as he always was to make money; yet his absence from France, his illnesses, his unlucky devotion to the theatre, and other things during

the last three or four years of his life, supply not altogether insufficient explanations of the failure.

If we suppose that he actually finished it, or that he left with it and with the *Député* distinct instructions to Rabou for its completion, we may observe some things of interest about the pair. One is their very great length as compared with most of their fellows. Only three other numbers of the *Comédie—Illusions Perdues, Les Célibataires*, and *Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes*—equal them in general length, and all these three are practically collections of separate tales, with a certain community of subject. But it must also be remembered that *La Cousine Bette*, their greatest and most immediate forerunner, is much longer than any other undivided single book. And from this, I think, it is not improper to infer that Balzac was experiencing a leaning towards longer stories, which might have had distinct results if he had gone on.

Secondly, in both stories, and here particularly in parts where there is no reason to question the appearance of his own work, we note not merely an apparent desire to wind up the clue of the histories of divers important personages, but also a tendency to refer and cross-refer to the earlier numbers of the *Comédie* in a way which may be found slightly irritating, but which is significant. For we know that in the magnificent dreams, the "lordly keeps of Spain," which Balzac cherished and dwelt in, the present *Comédie*, huge as it is, was, to keep the Dantean phrase, not an entire Commedia but only a Cantica of one—that there were to be other collections standing to it as the whole of the present mass stands to the divisions or Scenes. It was therefore natural that this task of winding up the clues should seem desirable to him. As in the *Député d'Arcis* we see the last of Vautrin, so here we part with an old—it is impossible to say, friend, but acquaintance, in Corentin. And it may be a slight bribe to the belief that

the thing is really Balzac's if we note that thus we leave off as we began; that as in *Les Chouans,* the revelation of the author, we heard of the spy's first exploits, so here we leave him breaking his wand, or rather transferring it to la Peyrade, with the exulting but ominous declaration that "all things pass except the police and the necessity for it," a sort of translation, in Balzac's key, of Joseph de Maistre's famous theory that society rests on the executioner. One may sigh for a little poetical justice, and wish that the manes of Montauran and Mlle. de Verneuil, of Michu and others, had not remained unavenged; but that would have counter-worked Balzaç's principles, sound enough if not pushed too far, that the *salus reipublicae* has precedence of all private rights and wrongs.

Not a very great deal need be said of the book itself. It has a certain resemblance to its great predecessor or contemporary or follower (for the dates are not certain), *La Cousine Bette;* but is almost entirely destitute of tragedy, except in the painful but happily-ending episode of Lydie de la Peyrade. In the minuteness of its attention to municipal matters, it shows almost as strongly as *Le Député d'Arcis* how Balzac's mind, under the conditions of the later July Monarchy, had been drawn to the subject of public life. I do not know whether it would be going too far to assume that it also shows, taken with *La Cousine Bette,* a certain tendency to exchange the technically "high" life in which the author had earlier delighted for the financial and *bourgeois* element which (as, to do him justice, he had long ago foreseen) was overtaking it hand over hand in point of political and social importance, and was, as he anticipated, to supersede it mainly under the Second Empire, and almost wholly under the Third Republic. The details, scenes, and characters, if not for Balzac extraordinarily brilliant, show at least no falling off. The Thuillier and Colleville households are ignoble, but not absolutely disgusting, and the intrigues of Cérizet

and others about the "succession Thuillier," though something of a double on *Le Cousin Pons,* are sufficiently different. But the author no doubt meant the main interest to centre on Théodose de la Peyrade and his amateur performance of something like the same honorable offices to which his uncle's Mephistophelian friend destined and devoted him. La Peyrade is of that class of persons who, as the Scotch judge remarked, "are clever chiels, but would be nane the waur of a hanging." But he repents and makes such amends as are possible for his chief overt crime, and he too is not disgusting.

The book, when in his letters Balzac spoke of it as first nearly finished and then actually "set up," bore the title of *Les Petits Bourgeois de Paris,* but nobody seems to have seen the MS. or the proofs. It actually appeared in the *Pays* during the autumn of 1854, and was afterwards issued as a book by the publisher de Potter in eight volumes—four bearing the present title in 1856, and the other four as *Les Parvenus* in 1857. The first part had twenty-seven, and the second twenty-five chapter divisions with headings. M. de Lovenjoul does not mention whether there was any special authority for the suppression of these when the book was at last, a few years ago, made part of the *Comédie,* or whether it was done in accordance with Balzac's usual practice.

G. S.

THE MIDDLE CLASSES

To Constance Victoire.

This, Madame, is one of the works which drop in on the author's mind, we know not whence, and please him before he can foresee what welcome they may receive from the public—the supreme judge in our day. Feeling almost sure that you will look kindly on my infatuation, I dedicate this book to you: is it not yours by right, as of old a tithe was due to the Church, in memory of God who makes all things grow and ripen in the fields and in the mind?

Some lumps of clay left by Molière at the foot of his colossal statue of Tartuffe have here been moulded by a hand less skilful than bold; still, however far I must remain beneath the greatest of comic writers, I shall be satisfied to have utilized these fragments, picked up from before the curtain of his stage, to show the modern hypocrite at work.

What has been most disheartening in this difficult task was finding it incompatible with any religious question, since for you, who are so pious, I had to avoid them, apart from what a great writer calls the "general indifference to matters of religion."

May the meaning of your two names be prophetic of the fortunes of the book! And regard this, I entreat you, as an expression of respectful gratitude from one who ventures to sign himself your most devoted servant,

DE BALZAC.

PART I.

THE Tourniquet (or Turnstile) Saint-Jean, of which a description seemed at the time so superfluous in the tale entitled *A Second Family,* was a primitive relic of old Paris which has ceased to exist but in that record. The building of the Hôtel de Ville in its modern form has cleared a whole quarter of the city.

In 1830 the passers-by could still see the Turnstile represented as the sign of a wine-shop, but that house, its last refuge, has since been demolished. Old Paris, alas! is vanishing with terrible rapidity. Here and there, in these books of mine, something will survive; a typical house of mediæval times like that described in the beginning of *The Cat and Racket*—a few such specimens may still be seen; or the house in the Rue du Fouarre inhabited by Judge Popinot, an example of old citizen dwellings. Here, the remains of the Fulbert's house; there, the Port of the Seine in the time of Charles IX. Why should not the chronicles of French social life, like another *Old Mortality,* rescue these remarkable records of the past, as Walter Scott's old man restored the tombstones?

The protests of literature during these ten years past were certainly not superfluous; art is again beginning to cover with its flowers the squalid fronts of the houses built for trade purposes, which one of our writers has compared to cupboards.

It may here be incidentally remarked that the creation of a municipal board *del Ornamento* such as, in Milan, regulates the architecture of streets, every proprietor having to submit his plans to its arbitration, dates from the twelfth century. And who can have failed to recognize in that charming capital the effects of patriotism in the nobles and citizen class alike, and to admire the character and originality of the private buildings?

The hideous and delirious spirit which, year after year,

lowers the stories of our houses, squeezes a whole set of rooms into the space of a single drawing-room, and wages war to the death against town gardens, must inevitably react on Paris habits. We shall soon be obliged to live out of our houses much more than in them. The sacredness of private life, the liberty of home—where are they? They are not to be had for less than fifty thousand francs a year. And, indeed, few millionaires even allow themselves the luxury of a whole small house protected by a courtyard from the street, and sheltered from the curiosity of the neighbors by a shady garden-plot.

The Code, which regulates the distribution of inherited fortunes by equalizing incomes, has led to this building of brick and mortar phalansteries to lodge thirty families, and yield a hundred thousand francs a year.

And so, fifty years hence, we may easily count the houses that will be left of the class inhabited by the Thuillier family at the time when this story opens; a really curious house deserving the honor of a detailed description, if it were only for the sake of comparing the citizen class of the past with its representatives to-day. And the situation and appearance of this residence, the setting of this picture of daily life, had a stamp, an aroma of middle-class existence, which may prove attractive or repulsive, as the reader may take it.

To begin with, the house did not belong to Monsieur or to Madame Thuillier, but to Mademoiselle Thuillier, Monsieur Thuillier's elder sister. This house, purchased by Mademoiselle Marie-Jeanne-Brigitte Thuillier in the course of the six months immediately following the revolution of 1830, stands about half-way down the Rue Saint-Dominique d'Enfer, on the right-hand side coming from the Rue d'Enfer, so that the house in which Monsieur Thuillier lived faces the south.

The steady migration of the Paris population towards the higher ground on the right bank of the Seine, deserting the left bank, had for some time damaged the sale of property in the so-called *quartier Latin*, where certain reasons, which

will appear from the character and habits of Monsieur Thuillier, made his sister decide on the purchase of a freehold. She was able to buy this one for the merely nominal price of forty-six thousand francs; additional items mounted up to six thousand francs; fifty-two thousand francs in all. A detailed description of the property in the style of an advertisement, and of the improvements effected by Monsieur Thuillier, will explain the way in which some fortunes were made in July 1830, while others were undermined.

Towards the street the house showed a front of stucco masonry, eaten by the weather, furrowed by the rain, and grooved by the plasterer's tool to imitate stone. This sort of façade is so common in Paris, and so ugly, that the municipality ought to offer prizes to owners who would build new fronts in carved stone. This drab wall, pierced by seven windows, was three stories high, and crowned by attics and a tiled roof. The carriage gateway, wide and strong, showed by its style and structure that the side towards the street had been first built at the time of the Empire, to utilize part of the courtyard of an extensive older house, surviving from the time when this quarter was in some favor as a residence.

On one side of the gateway was the porter's lodge; on the other the stairs went up of this front half of the house. Two wings adjoining the neighboring houses on each side had formerly been the coach-houses, stabling, kitchens, and servants' quarters for the house at the back of the courtyard; but these, since 1830, had been rented as warehouses. The right-hand side was occupied by a wholesale stationer, Monsieur Métivier *nephew;* the left side by a bookseller named Barbet. Their offices were over the storerooms and shops, the bookseller occupying the first floor, and the stationer the second floor, of the house on the street. Métivier, a paper broker rather than a merchant, and Barbet, more busied in discounting bills than in selling books, used these extensive premises for storing job lots of stationery purchased from manufacturers in difficulties in Métivier's half, and in Barbet's, the editions of books he had taken in security for loans. The shark of the

bookselling trade and the pike of the paper business lived on very friendly terms, and their transactions, having none of the bustle of a retail trade, brought but few carriages into that quiet courtyard, where there was so little traffic that the porter had to weed the grass out now and again from between the stones. Messieurs Barbet and Métivier, who hardly figure even as supernumeraries in this tale, paid rare visits to their landlord, and their punctuality in paying their rent placed them in the category of excellent tenants: the Thuillier circle regarded them as very honest folks.

The third floor facing the street was divided into two sets of rooms, one occupied by Monsieur Dutocq, clerk to a justice of the peace, a retired official who frequented the Thuilliers' drawing-room; the other was tenanted by the hero of this tale. For the present, however, we must be satisfied to know the amount of his rent—seven hundred francs—and the position he had taken up in the heart of the citadel three years before the curtain rises on this domestic drama.

Of these two sets of rooms the clerk, a bachelor of fifty, occupied the larger; he kept a cook and paid a rent of a thousand francs.

Two years after buying the house and ground, Mademoiselle Thuillier was getting seven thousand two hundred francs a year in rents; the former owner had left it fitted with outside shutters, had redecorated the interior, and finished it with mirrors, without ever succeeding in selling or letting it; and the Thuilliers themselves, very handsomely housed as will be seen, had one of the best gardens in that part of Paris, the trees shading the deserted little street called the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Catherine.

That part of the house which they inhabited, between the forecourt and garden, seemed to have been built to gratify the whim of some wealthy citizen in the time of Louis XIV., or that perhaps of a president of the *Parlement,* or of some peace-loving and learned student. There was a certain imposing *Louis-quatorzian* air in the handsome masonry, though the stone was weather-worn; the courses were marked out by

grooves; the paneling in red brick was a reminder of the stables at Versailles; the windows, arched above, had masks on the keystone and to support the sill. The door, the upper half of glass in small panes, showing the garden beyond, was of the unpretending, sound style frequently seen in the lodges of royal residences.

This dwelling, with five windows across, had but two stories above the ground floor, and was handsomely capped with a four-sided roof ending in weathercocks, and broken by well-designed chimneys and oval garret windows. The building, as it stood, may perhaps have been the surviving portion of some larger aristocratic hotel; still, after consulting the plans of Paris, no data seem to confirm this conjecture; moreover, the title-deeds in Mademoiselle Thuillier's possession mention Petitot, the famous enamel painter, as the owner in Louis XIV.'s time, and he had it from the President Lecamus. It is probable that the President lived in this house while his famous hotel in the Rue de Thorigny was in course of building.

Thus Law and Art alike had left their traces there. And how liberal a view of necessity and pleasure had presided over the arrangements of the dwelling! To the right, on entering the hall, a spacious square room, was a stone staircase, with two windows to the garden; under the stairs was a door to the cellars. From the hall opened the dining-room with windows to the courtyard, and a door beyond to the kitchens adjoining Barbet's stores. Behind the stairs on the garden side was a splendid study, also with two windows. The first and second floors each formed a separate set of apartments; the servants' rooms were shown by the dormer windows at each side of the roof.

The fine square hall contained a magnificent stove, and it was amply lighted by the two glass doors, front and back. It was paved with black and white marble, and had a decorative coffered ceiling of which the carved beams and bosses had once been painted and gilt, but, under the Empire no doubt, had

since been whitewashed; opposite the stove was a red marble cistern with a marble basin.

Over the three doors of the drawing-room, study, and dining-room were oval panels with pictures that cried out for much-needed restoration; the mouldings were heavy, but the decoration was not devoid of merit.

The drawing-room, wainscoted throughout, was reminiscent of the age of magnificence in its Languedoc marble chimney-place, in its ceiling with ornaments in the corners, and in the shape of the windows with their small panes. The dining-room, parallel with the drawing-room with double doors between, was floored with marble; the paneling entirely of oak and unpainted; but the tapestry had been replaced by villainous modern paper. The colored ceiling of chestnut wood remained unspoiled. The study, modernized by Thuillier, was wholly discordant. The white and gold ornament of the drawing-room was so completely faded that only red lines were to be seen in the place of the gold, and the white paint had turned yellow and streaky, and was flaking off.

The Latin idea *Otium cum dignitate* has never, to a poet's eyes, been more admirably suggested than in this fine old house. The ironwork of the balustrade to the stairs was worthy in style of the Judge and of the Artist; but to discern their traces in these relics of a dignified antiquity the observing eye of an artist was needed.

The Thuilliers and their immediate predecessors had done much dishonor to this gem of wealthy citizenship by their middle-class habits and tastes. Imagine walnut-wood chairs with horsehair seats; a mahogany table with an oil-cloth cover; lamps in stamped metal; a cheap paper with a red border; atrocious black and white prints on the walls, and cotton curtains with a red binding—in this dining-room where Petitot's friends had feasted. Conceive of the effect in the drawing-room of the portraits of Monsieur, Madame, and Mademoiselle Thuillier, by Pierre Grassou, the painter of their class; of card-tables that had done twenty years' service; consoles of

the time of the Empire, and a tea-table supported on a huge lyre; a set of furniture in coarse mahogany covered with printed velvet on a chocolate ground! On the chimney-piece stood a clock with a figure representing Bellona, and candelabra with fluted columns; the curtains of worsted damask and the worked muslin curtains were looped back with stamped brass chains. A second-hand carpet covered the polished floor.

The handsome hall was furnished with benches covered with plush, and the carved paneling was hidden behind cupboards and wardrobes of various dates, removed from all the places where the Thuilliers had ever lived. The cistern was covered by a shelf to carry a smoky lamp dating from 1815. And to crown all, fear, that hideous bogie, had led to the addition of double doors both to the garden and the forecourt, strongly sheathed in iron, opened back against the wall by day, but shut by night.

It is easy to trace the deplorable desecration of this monument of domestic life in the seventeenth century by the domestic life of the nineteenth. When Napoleon first was Consul perhaps some master builder, having purchased this little freehold, thought he would make some use of the part of the forecourt next the street; he probably destroyed a noble gateway flanked by lodges which gave importance to this elegant residence, to use an old-fashioned word, and the thrift of a Parisian builder stamped its blight on the very front of its elegance; just as the newspapers and their printing-presses, the manufactory and its warehouses, trade and its counting-houses, have ousted the aristocracy, the old citizen-class, finance and law, wherever they had displayed their magnificence.

A very curious study is that of the history of title-deeds in Paris! In the Rue des Batailles a madhouse stands where once was the house of the Chevalier Pierre Bayard du Terrail; the "third estate" has built a whole street on the land occupied by the Hôtel Necker. Old Paris is going—following the kings who are gone. For one gem of architecture

saved by a Polish princess,* how many smaller palaces have fallen, like Petitot's house, into the hands of such as the Thuilliers.

The incidents which led to Mademoiselle Thuillier's purchasing this property were as follows.

At the fall of the Villèle administration Monsieur Louis Jérôme Thuillier, who had been for six-and-twenty years a clerk in the civil service, found himself a second clerk, but hardly had he tasted the joys of such deputy authority—formerly the smallest of his hopes—when the events of July 1830 compelled him to resign. He very ingeniously calculated that the new men, only too glad to have another place at their command, would deal promptly and handsomely with the question of his pension; and he was right, for it was at once fixed at seventeen hundred francs.

When the cautious second clerk first mooted the idea of retiring, his sister, who was far more his life's partner than his wife had ever been, trembled for his future prospects.

"What would Thuillier do with himself?" was the question the two women asked each other with equal fears; they were at that time living in a small apartment on the third floor in the Rue d'Argenteuil.

"Settling the matter of his pension will keep him busy for some time," said Mademoiselle Thuillier. "But I am thinking of investing my money in a way that will keep his hands full. It will be almost as good as being in an office to have an estate to manage."

"Oh, my dear sister, we will save his life!" cried Madame Thuillier.

"Well, I have always foreseen this critical moment in Jérôme's life," said the old maid with a patronizing air.

Mademoiselle Thuillier had too often heard her brother say: "Such an one is dead; he only lived two years after retiring!"—she had too often heard Colleville, Thuillier's intimate

*The Hôtel Lambert, Ile Saint-Louis, in which the Princess Czartoriska took up her abode.

friend and, like him, a government clerk, jesting about the grand climacteric of office life, saying: "We shall come to it too, all in good time!"—not to appreciate the risk for her brother.

The transition from routine to idleness is in fact the critical time for the civil servant. The men who are incapable of substituting some occupation for the business they have left change very much; some die, a great many take to fishing—a vacuous employment not unlike their office work; others, of more active habits, buy shares in a business, lose their savings, and are glad at last to take a place in the working of the concern which, after the first failure and bankruptcy, succeeds in the hands of cleverer men on the lookout for it; then the clerk can rub his now empty hands and say, "I always knew there was a future before us."

But most of them struggle against their old habits.

"Some," said Colleville, "are victims to depression of a kind peculiar to government clerks. They die of suppressed circulars; they suffer from red-tape-worm. Little old Poiret could never see a white letter folio edged with blue without changing color at the beloved sight; he turned yellow instead of green."

Mademoiselle Thuillier was regarded as the genius of her brother's household; she had plenty of force and decision, as her personal history will show. This superiority, which was but relative, enabled her to gauge her brother, though she worshiped him. After seeing the wreck of the hopes she had founded on her idol, there was too much of the mother in her feeling to allow her to overestimate the social calibre of the retired clerk.

Thuillier and his sister were the children of the head porter at the Exchequer office. Jérôme, being very short-sighted, had escaped every form of requisition and conscription. The father's ambition was to see his son a clerk. At the beginning of the century there were so many places to fill in the army that the vacancies in the offices were many, and the death of

under-clerks enabled burly old Thuillier to see his son mount the lowest steps of the official ladder.

The old man died in 1814, when Jérôme was about to be made second clerk; but this hope was all the fortune he had to leave him. Old Thuillier and his wife who died in 1810, had retired in 1806, their life pension all their wealth, having spent their income in giving Jérôme his education and in keeping him and his sister.

The effect of the Restoration on government offices is well known. A mass of clerks were turned out of employment by the suppression of forty-one government departments, honest men ready to take places below those they had been deprived of. The ranks of these men, who had earned their claims, were swelled by the members of exiled families ruined by the Revolution. Jérôme, squeezed between these two bodies of recruits, thought himself lucky not to be dismissed on some frivolous pretext. He quaked till the day when by good chance he was made second clerk and saw himself sure of a decent pension.

This brief sketch accounts for Monsieur Thuillier's limited purview and lack of general knowledge. He had learned such Latin, arithmetic, history, and geography as boys are taught at school, but he had not risen above what was called the second class because his father seized the opportunity of getting him into the office, boasting of his son's "splendid hand." So, though little Thuillier wrote the first list of names in the State ledger, he missed his course of rhetoric and philosophy.

Once made a wheel of the official machinery he troubled himself little about letters, and still less about art; he imbibed an empirical knowledge of his own line of business; and when, under the Empire, he rose to mix with the superior class of clerks, he caught the superficial manners that hid the porter's son, but he failed to catch even the semblance of ready wit. His ignorance warned him to be silent, and his taciturnity did him good service. Under the Imperial system he trained himself to the passive obedience which superiors ap-

preciate, and it was to this qualification that he subsequently owed his advancement to be second clerk. The fruit of routine was great experience; his manner and his silent habits concealed his want of education.

These negative merits constituted a recommendation when a cipher was needed. There was the risk of offending one of two parties in the Chamber, each anxious to place a man, and the authorities got out of the difficulty by falling back on the rule of seniority. That was how Thuillier became a second clerk.

Mademoiselle Thuillier, knowing that her brother abhorred reading, and could not go into any business as a substitute for the task-work of the office, had wisely determined to give him the cares of property, the management of a garden, the minute trivialities of middle-class life, and the trifling intrigues of neighborly gossip.

So the removal of the household from the Rue d'Argenteuil to the Rue Saint-Dominique d'Enfer, the business involved in the purchase, the selection of a porter, the search for tenants, all kept Thuillier busy through 1831-1832. When this great transplantation was achieved, when the sister saw that Jérôme had survived the uprooting, she gave him further employment, as we shall presently see, for which she found a basis in her brother's nature; this may at once be described.

Though only a superior porter's son, Jérôme was what is called a fine man; above the medium height, slightly built, not bad looking with his spectacles on, but, like many short-sighted persons, hideous as soon as he took them off, for the habit of seeing through glasses had induced a sort of mist over his eyes. Between the age of eighteen and thirty young Thuillier was a favorite with women in the social sphere that rests on the middle class and ends below the head clerks of Departments; but, as is well known, under the Empire the wars left Paris society somewhat bereft by taking every man of any energy out to the battlefield; and to this, perhaps, as a great physician has surmised, the decadence of the generation living in the middle of the nineteenth century may be due.

Thuillier, compelled to attract attention by some accomplishments other than intellectual, learned to dance and waltz so well as to be noted; he was called "handsome Thuillier"; he played billiards to perfection; he cut out paper very ingeniously; his friend Colleville taught him so well that he could sing some fashionable ballads. These little accomplishments procured him the spurious success which deceives the young, and deludes them as to the future. Mademoiselle Thuillier, from 1806 till 1814, believed in her brother as Mademoiselle d'Orléans believed in Louis-Philippe; she was proud of Jérôme; she pictured him the head of an office, thanks to the popularity which at that time gave him access to a few drawing-rooms where he certainly never would have been sent but for the circumstances which made society under the Empire a perfect hotchpotch.

However, handsome Thuillier's triumphs were not usually of long duration; women no more cared to keep him than he cared to be perpetually faithful; he might have served as the hero of a comedy called "Don Juan in spite of himself." This business of being handsome bored Thuillier till it made him look old; and his face, covered with wrinkles like that of an antiquated beauty, credited him with twelve years more than the baptismal register. He had retained a habit of glancing at himself in the glass, putting his hands on his hips to set off his figure, and assuming the attitudes of a dancing master, all of which prolonged the lease of the nickname "handsome Thuillier" beyond the advantages which had bestowed it on him.

What was true in 1806 was sarcastic in 1826. He still preserved some vestiges of the dress of the dandy of the Empire, nor were they unbecoming to the dignity of a retired second clerk. He wore the full plaited neckcloth burying his chin, with ends that imperiled the passers-by projecting from a neatly smart knot, tied of yore by fairer hands. Following the fashions at a respectful distance he adapted them to his own style, wore his hat very far back, shoes in summer and fine stockings. His long overcoat was a reminiscence of the

lévite of the Empire; he would not give up pleated shirt-frills and white waistcoats, he was always playing with his switch, a fashion of 1810, and held himself very upright. No one, seeing Thuillier walking on the boulevards, would have taken him for the son of a man who served the clerks' breakfasts at the office of the Exchequer; he looked like a *diplomate* of the Empire, or a *sous-préfet*.

Now not only did Mademoiselle Thuillier very innocently encourage her brother's vanity by inciting him to the utmost care of his person, which was but the outcome of her worship, but she gave him all the joys of family life by transplanting close to him a household whose existence had run almost parallel with theirs.

Its head was Monsieur Colleville, Thuillier's intimate friend; but before describing Pylades it is all the more necessary to have done with Orestes, since it must be explained why Thuillier, handsome Thuillier, found himself without a family, for without children the family is not, and here must be revealed one of those deep mysteries which lie buried among the arcana of private life, a few symptoms only rising to the surface when the anguish of a hidden sorrow becomes too acute; the life, namely, of Madame and Mademoiselle Thuillier; for so far we have seen only the public life, so to speak, of Jérôme Thuillier.

Marie-Jeanne-Brigitte Thuillier, four years older that her brother, was immolated for his benefit; it was easier to give him a profession than to give her a marriage portion. To some natures ill-fortune is a pharos lighting up the dark and squalid places in social life. Superior to her brother both in energy and intelligence, Brigitte had a character which the sledge-hammer of persecution makes dense, compact, and highly resistant, not to say inflexible. Eager for independence, she determined to escape from her life in the porter's lodge and be mistress of her own fate. At the age of fourteen she established herself in an attic not far from the Treasury, which was then in the Rue Vivienne, and near the Rue de la Vrillière where the Bank still stands. There she coura-

geously set up in a little unfamiliar business under the privilege and patronage of her father's masters: the manufacture of money-bags for the Bank, the Treasury, and certain great banking-houses. By the end of three years she employed two workwomen.

Investing her savings in consols, by 1814 she found herself possessed of three thousand six hundred francs a year, the results of fifteen years' earnings. She spent but little, she dined with her father every day as long as he lived, and, as is known, French consols during the dying struggles of the Empire went down to forty odd francs, so this sum, apparently exaggerated, is easily accounted for.

At the old man's death, Brigitte and Jérôme, aged respectively twenty-seven and twenty-three, set up house together. The brother and sister were most affectionately attached. When, in the days of his splendor, Jérôme was at any time in need of money, his sister, dressed in coarse stuff and her fingers skinned by the thread she sewed with, always had some louis to offer him. In Brigitte's eyes Jérôme was the handsomest and most charming man in all the French Empire. To keep house for this adored brother, to be admitted to the secrets of this Lindoro and Don Juan, was Brigitte's day-dream; she sacrificed herself almost passionately to an idol whose egoism she could magnify and hold sacred. She sold her business to her forewoman for fifteen thousand francs, and went to settle with Jérôme in the Rue d'Argenteuil, making herself the mother, protector, and slave of this *pet of the ladies.*

Brigitte, with the instinctive prudence of a woman who owed all she had to her own prudence and toil, hid the amount of her property from her brother; she was afraid, no doubt, of the prodigalities of a man so much in favor, and only brought six hundred francs a year to the common stock; this, added to Jérôme's eighteen hundred, enabled her to make both ends meet at the close of the year.

From the very first day of their partnership Thuillier listened to his sister as to an oracle, consulted her on even the most trifling matters, had no secrets from her, thus giving

her a taste of the fruit of despotism which became her besetting sin. And, indeed, the sister had sacrificed everything to the brother, she had staked her all on his affection, she lived in and for him.

Her ascendency over Jérôme was singularly confirmed by the marriage she contrived for him in 1814.

Witnessing the nipping squeeze in government offices that resulted from the newcomers under the Restoration, and more especially from the return of the old society which trampled down the citizen class, Brigitte understood, and indeed her brother explained to her, the bearing of the crisis that was extinguishing all their hopes. There could be no further successes for handsome Thuillier among the nobility who were succeeding to the plebeians of the Empire.

Thuillier was not capable of taking up a political opinion; he felt, as did his sister, that he must make the best of his remaining youth to end with credit. In these circumstances an old maid as ambitious as Brigitte wished and determined to see her brother marry, as much for her own sake as for his, since she alone would make him happy, and Madame Thuillier would be but an accessory indispensable for the production of a child or two.

Though Brigitte's mind was hardly adequate to her will, at any rate she had the instinct that served her despotic temper; she had no education, she simply went straight onward, with the persistency of a character accustomed to succeed. She had a genius for home management, the spirit of thrift, the talents of a housekeeper, and the love of work. She fully understood that she could never succeed in finding a wife for Jérôme in a class above their own, a family who would make inquiries as to their mode of life and perhaps be scared at finding a mistress already established in the home; so she looked in a rank below for the people she might dazzle, and she found a suitable match under her hand.

The senior messenger of the Bank of France, named Lemprun, had a daughter, an only child, Céleste. Mademoiselle Céleste Lemprun would inherit her mother's fortune, she also

being the only child of a market-gardener whose property consisted of some acres of land near Paris which the old man still cultivated. Then there would be the savings left by the worthy Lemprun, a man who, after being employed in the houses of Thellusson and of Keller, had entered service at the Bank when it was first started. Lemprun, now a head servant, enjoyed the respect and esteem of the government officials and inspectors. Hence the Board of Directors, on hearing that Céleste was to be married to a respectable clerk in the civil service, promised a donation of six thousand francs; and this sum, added to twelve thousand given by her father and twelve thousand from old Galard, the market-gardener at Auteuil, raised the marriage portion to thirty thousand francs. Old Galard and Monsieur and Madame Lemprun were delighted by this alliance; the head messenger knew Mademoiselle Thuillier to be one of the most upright and respectable women in Paris. Brigitte gave lustre to her investments in the funds by assuring Lemprun that she would never marry, and neither he nor his wife, figures from the Golden Age, would have made so bold as to criticise Brigitte. They were especially struck by the handsome Thuillier's brilliant position, and the marriage was concluded to the satisfaction of all parties.

The governor and secretary of the Bank signed the documents as witnesses for the bride; Monsieur de la Billardière, head of his department, and Monsieur Rabourdin, a head clerk, did the same for Thuillier.

Six days after the wedding old Lemprun was the victim of a very daring robbery, mentioned in the papers of the time, but quickly forgotten in the exciting events of 1815. The thieves having entirely evaded pursuit, Lemprun wished to pay for the loss; and though the Bank in fact charged the sum to the account of bad debts, the poor old man died of grief caused by this disaster. He regarded it as a blow to his honesty of seventy years' standing.

Madame Lemprun gave the whole of her husband's money to her daughter, Madame Thuillier, and went to live with her

father at Auteuil, where the old man died of an accident in 1817.

Alarmed at the thought of managing or letting her father's fields and gardens, Madame Lemprun, amazed at Brigitte's capabilities and honesty, begged her to realize the property, and so arrange matters that her daughter should take everything into her own hands, allowing her fifteen hundred francs a year and leaving her the house at Auteuil. The old man's land, sold in lots, realized thirty thousand francs. Lemprun had left as much, and the two fortunes, added to Céleste's marriage portion, amounted in 1818 to ninety thousand francs.

Céleste's money had been invested in Bank shares at a time when they stood at nine hundred francs. With the sixty thousand francs Brigitte secured five thousand francs a year, for five per cents were at sixty, and she charged this, with fifteen hundred francs a year of life interest, to the Widow Lemprun. Thus, at the beginning of 1818, with Thuillier's salary of three thousand four hundred francs, Céleste's income of three thousand five hundred, and the dividends on thirty-four shares in the Bank of France, the annual sum passing through Brigitte's uncontrolled hands amounted to eleven thousand francs.

It was necessary to set forth this financial position from the beginning, not only to anticipate difficulties, but to clear the stage for the drama.

Brigitte in the first place allowed her brother five hundred francs a month, and so managed the house that five thousand a year paid all expenses; she allowed her sister-in-law fifty francs a month, demonstrating that she for her part was satisfied with forty. To secure her dominion by the power of money Brigitte hoarded the surplus of her private dividends; she was a money lender, it was said in the offices, her brother acting as her agent and discounting bills. Still, though Brigitte accumulated a capital of sixty thousand francs between 1813 and 1840, the existence of such a sum can be accounted for by transactions on 'change, the funds varying as much as

forty per cent. without having recourse to accusations more or less veracious, of which the truth would add nothing to the interest of this story.

From the very first Brigitte broke in the hapless Madame Thuillier by a free use of the spurs and the sawing of the bit which she made her feel. But this luxury of tyranny was wasted; the victim yielded at once. Céleste, justly gauged by Brigitte, devoid of spirit and education, accustomed to a sedentary life and tranquil atmosphere, was excessively placid by nature, pious in the widest sense of the word, and ready to expiate by the hardest penance the most involuntary fault that could inflict pain on another. She was absolutely ignorant of life, accustomed to be waited on by her mother, who did all the work herself, and compelled to keep very quiet by a lymphatic constitution, which made the least exertion a fatigue. She was a typical child of the Paris middle class, where such children are constantly seen, rarely gifted with beauty,—the product of poverty, of overwork, of airless dwellings, bereft of freedom and of all the conveniences of life.

At the time of her marriage Céleste was a little woman, nauseatingly fair and colorless, fat, slow, and very stupid-looking. Her forehead, too high and prominent, suggested water on the brain, and under that dome a face evidently too small and ending in a point like a mouse's snout, led some of the guests to hint that she might sooner or later go out of her mind. Her pale blue eyes, and lips set in a perpetual smile, did not contradict the idea. On her wedding-day, a solemn occasion, she had the look, the manner, and the attitude of a person condemned to death, and only hoping it will be soon over.

"She is a little soft!" said Colleville to Thuillier.

Brigitte was the knife that would stab this nature, the utmost contrast to her own. She had a stamp of beauty in her regular and classic features, but destroyed by the toil which from her infancy had kept her bent over coarse and unbeautiful work, and by the privations she voluntarily endured to

amass her little hoard. Her complexion, washed to a polish at a very early age, had the hue of steel. Her dark eyes were set in black, or rather in bruised circles; her upper lip was marked with dark down, a sort of sootiness; her lips were thin, and her imperious forehead was crowned by hair that had been black, but was fast turning to chinchilla. She was as upright as any handsome woman could be, and everything about her betrayed a hard life, suppressed fires, and the cost of her gains.

To this woman Céleste was simply a fortune to absorb, a mother to mate, one more subject in her empire. She soon found fault with her for being so flabby,—a word constantly on her tongue,—and the acrid old maid, who would have been heartbroken if she had had a managing sister-in-law, found a savage pleasure in stinging this helpless creature to activity. Céleste, ashamed of seeing her sister-in-law display her housewifely energy and do the housework, tried to help her; then she fell ill; at once Brigitte was devoted in caring for her; she nursed her like a sister, and would say before Jérôme:

"You are not strong enough; well, then, do nothing, poor child!" emphasizing Céleste's incapacity with the display of pity by which the strong, affecting gentle compassion for the weak, contrive to insinuate their own praises.

But as all such despotic natures love to use their strength and show great tenderness for physical suffering, she nursed her sister-in-law so well that Céleste's mother was quite satisfied when she came to see her.

When Madame Thuillier was well again Brigitte would say, in such a way as to be heard: "Limp rag! of no use whatever!" and the like. Céleste retired to her room to weep, and when Thuillier found her in tears he would make excuses for his sister.

"She is as good as gold, but she is hot-tempered. She loves you after her own fashion; she is just the same to me."

And Céleste, remembering her sister-in-law's motherly care, forgave her.

Brigitte regarded her brother as king of the household; she praised him up to Céleste and treated him as an autocrat, a Ladislas, an infallible Pope. Madame Thuillier, bereft of her father and her grandfather, and almost deserted by her mother who came to see her on Thursdays, while they went to her on Sundays in the summer, had no one to love but her husband; in the first place because he was her husband, and also because to her he was always "handsome Thuillier." Besides, he sometimes behaved to her as if she were his wife, and for all these reasons combined she worshiped him. He seemed to her all the more perfect when he often took her part, and scolded his sister, not out of regard for Céleste but from sheer selfishness, to secure peace in the house during the few minutes he spent there. In fact Thuillier dined at home, and came in to bed very late; he went to balls in his own circle, alone and exactly as though he were still a bachelor.

Thus the two women were always together. Céleste unconsciously adopted a passive attitude, and became, as Brigitte wished, a perfect slave. The Queen Elizabeth of the household went through a change from domineering to a sort of pity for this perpetually crushed victim. She finally set aside her haughty airs, her cutting words, her tone of contempt, feeling sure that she had bent her sister-in-law to the yoke.

As soon as she realized that her slave's neck was bruised by the collar, she took care of her as of a piece of personal property, and Céleste knew better days. Then, comparing the end with the beginning, she felt a sort of affection for her tormentor.

The poor soul had but one chance that might have given her spirit to defend herself, to become something—somebody—in the household that lived on her money, though she did not know it, while she got nothing but the crumbs from the table; but that chance never favored her.

At the end of six years Céleste had no child.

This misfortune, over which, month after month, she shed torrents of tears, did much to add fuel to Brigitte's scorn; she pronounced her of no use at all, not even to bear children.

The old maid, who had dreamed of loving her brother's children as if they were her own, was slow in getting used to the idea of this irremediable misfortune.

At the time when this story opens, in 1840, at the age of forty-six, Céleste had ceased to weep, for she was mournfully certain that she would never be a mother. Strange to say, after twenty-five years of a life in which victory had finally blunted and broken the knife, Brigitte was as fond of Céleste as Céleste was of her. Time, ample means, the incessant friction of daily life which had no doubt rubbed off the corners and smoothed down asperities, with Céleste's lamblike resignation and sweetness, had led to a serene autumn. And the two women were united by the one feeling they had ever known: their adoration for the fortunate and selfish Thuillier.

And then these two women, both childless, had each, like every woman who has longed in vain to be a mother, devoted herself to a child. This spurious motherhood, quite as absorbing as real motherhood, needs an explanation which brings us to the main action of the drama, and will account for the abundant occupation found by Mademoiselle Thuillier for her brother.

Thuillier had entered the office as supernumerary clerk at the same time as Colleville, who has already been mentioned as his intimate friend. Compared to the dull and methodical rule of Thuillier's house, social nature had created Colleville's as a complete contrast, and while it is impossible not to remark that this fortuitous contrast is far from moral, it must be added that before jumping to a conclusion it will be well to read the story to the end—a story for which, being but too true, the author cannot be held responsible.

This Colleville was the son of a clever musician, formerly first violin at the opera in the days of Francœur and Rebel. At least six times a month, as long as he lived, he would relate anecdotes about the performances of *Le Devin du Village,* imitating Jean-Jacques Rousseau with wonderful exactitude. Colleville and Thuillier were inseparable; they had no

secrets from each other, and their friendship, begun at the age of fifteen, had known no cloud in 1839.

Colleville was one of the clerks called "pluralists" in government offices. Such men are always distinguished by their industry. Colleville, who was a good musician, held by favor of his father's name and influence the place of first clarinet player at the Opéra Comique, and as long as he was a bachelor, Colleville, being a little better off than Thuillier, often shared with his friend. But Colleville, unlike Thuillier, married to please himself: Mademoiselle Flavie, the illegitimate child of a famous opera-dancer who called the girl du Bourguier, asserting that she was the daughter of a rich contractor of that name who was ruined in 1800, and who forgot the child all the more completely because he had doubts as to the celebrated lady's fidelity.

Flavie's birth and appearance had destined her to a sorry fate when Colleville, having frequent occasion to visit her mother, who lived in luxury, fell in love with the girl and married her. Prince Galathionne, the dancer's "protector" in September 1815, when her brilliant career was drawing to a close, gave Flavie twenty thousand francs as a wedding portion, and her mother furnished her with a magnificent trousseau. The visitors to her house made her presents of jewelry and plate, so the Collevilles started in housekeeping richer in superfluities than in capital.

Flavie, brought up in luxury, had at first a pretty apartment furnished by her mother's decorator, and here the young wife held court, airing her taste for art and artists, amid a certain display of elegance.

Madame Colleville was pretty and *piquante,* bright, gay, and gracious, and a thorough "good fellow." The dancer, who was now four-and-forty, retired from the stage and went to live in the country, thus depriving her daughter of the benefit she derived from her mother's wealth and extravagance. Madame Colleville's house was pleasant enough but desperately expensive.

Between 1816 and 1826 she had five children. Colleville,

a musician at night, kept a merchant's books from seven till nine every morning. By ten he was at the office. And so, by blowing into a wooden pipe in the evening, and writing out accounts by double entry in the morning, he made seven or eight thousand francs a year.

Madame Colleville played the real lady; she was "at home" on Wednesdays, she gave a music party once a week, and a dinner once a fortnight. She only saw her husband at dinner; in the evening, when he came in towards midnight, she often had not returned. She was at the play, for she sometimes had a box given her, or she left word for Colleville to fetch her from some house where she was at a dance or a supper.

Madame Colleville's dinners were excellent, and the company, if mixed, was very amusing; she received distinguished actresses, painters, men of letters, and some men of wealth. Madame Colleville could vie in elegance with Tullia, the famous opera-singer, of whom she saw a great deal; still, though the Collevilles drew on their capital, and often found it difficult to make both ends meet at the end of the month, Flavie was never in debt.

Colleville was very happy; he still loved his wife and was still her great friend. Always welcomed with the same affectionate smile and infectious good spirits, he yielded to her irresistible fascinations and ways.

The exhausting toil he went through in his three separate avocations suited his character and temperament. He was a good-natured, burly fellow, florid, jolly, and lavish, and full of whims. In ten years there was never a squabble in the household. In the office he was regarded as a scatterbrain, like all artists, as they said; but they were superficial judges who mistook the constant haste of a busy man for the hurry of a muddler.

He had sense enough to affect a certain stupidity; he would boast of his domestic happiness, and pretend to be interested in concocting anagrams, as if he were absorbed by a passion for them. The clerks of his division, the heads of divisions,

and even heads of offices came to his concerts; from time to time, at fitting moments, he would offer tickets for a play, for he needed much indulgence for his frequent absence from work. Rehearsals took up half the time he ought to have spent at the office, but the musical gifts he had inherited from his father were genuine, and his knowledge great enough to exempt him from any but the general rehearsals. Thanks to Madame Colleville's influence, the theatre and the authorities respectively yielded to the necessities of this worthy pluralist, who, besides all this, was training a young fellow earnestly recommended by his wife, a great musician of the future, who sometimes took his place in the orchestra with every hope of succeeding him.

In point of fact, in 1827, when Colleville retired, the said young man became the first clarinet.

As to Flavie, she was summed up in the sentence: "She is a bit of a flirt!"

The eldest Colleville child, born in 1816, was the very image of its good father. In 1818 Madame Colleville thought everything of the cavalry, ranking it even above the arts; she smiled on a lieutenant of the Saint-Chamans dragoons, Charles de Gondreville, who was young and rich, and who died afterwards in the Spanish war; her second son, then a baby, was destined to a soldier's life. In 1820 she considered the Bank as the foster-mother of industry and the mainstay of the State, and the great Keller, the famous orator, was her idol. Her third son was born, François, who was to go into business and would never lack the advantage of Keller's protection. By the end of 1820 Thuillier, Monsieur and Madame Colleville's intimate friend and Flavie's great admirer, felt the need of pouring out his sorrows in that excellent woman's heart, and expatiated on his matrimonial troubles. For six years he had hoped for a child, but God had not blessed his efforts; in vain did Madame Thuillier have masses said; she had even been to Notre Dame de Liesse! He described Céleste under every aspect, and the words "Poor Thuillier" fell from Madame Colleville's lips. She, for her

part, was just then rather depressed; she had no predominant opinion. She confided her sorrows to Thuillier. The great Keller, the hero of the Left, was in fact horribly mean; she had seen the sunny side of glory, the follies of finance, the shallowness of an orator. He never would say a word excepting in the Chamber, and he had behaved very badly to her. Thuillier was indignant.

"Only simpletons know how to love," said he; "take me!"

And handsome Thuillier was said to be making up to Madame Colleville, paying her attentions, as the phrase was under the Empire.

"So you are sweet on my wife," said Colleville, laughing. "You had better beware; she will leave you in the lurch like all the rest!"

A cunning speech by which Colleville guarded his marital dignity in the office.

In 1820-1821 Thuillier availed himself of his position as a friend of the family to help Colleville, who had so often helped him of old; and in the course of eighteen months he had lent the Collevilles nearly ten thousand francs, never intending to mention it. In the spring of 1821 Madame Colleville gave birth to a charming little girl to whom Monsieur and Madame Thuillier stood sponsors; she was named Céleste Louise Caroline Brigitte; Mademoiselle Thuillier wished that this angel should bear one of her names. The name Caroline was given in compliment to Colleville.

Old Madame Lemprun undertook to put the child out to nurse under her own eye at Auteuil, where Céleste and her sister went to see her twice a week.

As soon as Madame Colleville was strong again she said to Thuillier quite frankly and seriously:

"My dear friend, if we are to continue good friends, we must be nothing more. Colleville is greatly attached to you; well, one in the family is enough."

"Pray tell me," said Thuillier to Tullia, the dancer, who was calling on Madame Colleville, "why women are so little attached to me. I am not the Belvedere Apollo, but on the

other hand I am not a Vulcan; I am fairly good-looking, I can talk, I am constant——"

"Do you want to know the truth?" asked Tullia.

"Yes," said handsome Thuillier.

"Well, then, though we sometimes love an idiot, we never can love a fool."

This speech crushed Thuillier; he could not get over it. He had a fit of melancholy and accused womankind of caprice.

"Did not I warn you?" said Colleville; "I am not a Napoleon, my dear fellow; I should even be very sorry if I were, but I have my Joséphine—a jewel!"

The chief Secretary in her husband's office, des Lupeaulx, whom Madame Colleville supposed to have more influence than he had—she used to say later: "He was one of my mistakes"—was for a time the great man of the Colleville drawing-room; but as he had not power enough to get Colleville promoted to the division of Bois-Levant, Flavie had wit enough to take umbrage at the attentions he paid Madame Rabourdin, the wife of a head-clerk, a minx, as she said, to whose house she had never been invited, and who had twice been so impertinent as not to come to her music parties.

Flavie was dreadfully shocked by young Gondreville's death; she was quite inconsolable; she saw in it, she said, the hand of God. In 1824 she mended her ways, talked about economizing, received no more company, devoted herself to her children, and set up for being a virtuous wife and mother; her friends did not know of any favorite in attendance. But she went much to church, she corrected her dress, wearing sober grays; she talked of religion and the proprieties; and this mysticism resulted in the birth, in 1825, of a pretty little boy, named Théodore, the gift of God.

In 1826, when the Congregation was all-powerful, Colleville was made second clerk in Clergeot's division, and in 1828 promoted to be revenue collector in a Paris district. Colleville also obtained the Cross of the Legion of Honor,

to entitle him, by and by, to have his daughter educated at Saint-Denis. The half-scholarship which Keller had succeeded in getting in 1823 for Charles, the eldest of Colleville's boys, was given to the second; Charles secured a whole scholarship at the Collège Saint-Denis, and the third, to whom Madame the Dauphiness extended her protection, had three-quarters of a scholarship at the Collège Henri IV.

In 1830 Colleville's attachment to the Legitimate branch compelled him to retire; all his children were happily living. He was so fortunate as to be able to get something for his place, a pension of two thousand four hundred francs as the reward of long service and an indemnity of ten thousand francs from his successor; he was also promoted to be an officer of the Legion of Honor. He nevertheless found himself in straitened circumstances, and in 1832 Mademoiselle Thuillier advised him to settle near them, hinting that he might obtain a clerkship at the Mairie, as, in fact, he did within a fortnight, with a salary of a thousand crowns.

Charles Colleville had just entered the Naval School. The schools to which the other boys went were in the neighborhood. The seminary of Saint-Sulpice, where the youngest was one day to be educated, was close to the Luxembourg. Finally, Thuillier and Colleville really ought to end their days together.

In 1833 Madame Colleville, now five-and-thirty, settled in the Rue d'Enfer at the corner of the Rue des Deux-Eglises with Céleste and little Théodore; thus Colleville was about equally far from his Mairie and the Rue Saint-Dominique. The family, after leading a life at first of show and dissipation and constant festivities, and then of quiet retirement, was now reduced to middle-class obscurity with a total income of five thousand four hundred francs.

Céleste was now twelve years old; she promised to be pretty; she required masters; she would cost at least two thousand francs a year. Her mother felt that she must be placed under the eye of her godfather and godmother. So she acted on Mademoiselle Thuillier's suggestion, in every

way a wise one; and Brigitte, without in any way pledging herself, made Madame Colleville understand pretty clearly that her fortune, with her brother's and Madame Thuillier's, was to be settled on Céleste. The little girl had lived at Auteuil till the age of seven, worshiped by kind old Madame Lemprun, who died in 1829, leaving twenty thousand francs in savings, and her house, which sold for the enormous sum of twenty-eight thousand.

The little girl had seen but little of her mother and a great deal of Madame and Mademoiselle Thuillier since going home to her father's house in 1829. In 1833 she fell more exclusively under Flavie's management, and the mother then tried conscientiously to do her duty, overdoing it indeed, as women do who are tortured by remorse. Flavie, without being hard, was very strict with the little girl; she looked back on her own early training and vowed to herself that she would make an honest woman, and not a light woman, of Céleste. She took her to church and made her take her first communion under the direction of a Paris curé who has since been made a bishop. Céleste was all the more genuinely pious because Madame Thuillier, her godmother, whom she adored, was a perfect saint. Céleste felt that she was better loved by this poor, lonely woman than by her own mother.

Between 1833 and 1840 she had the most brilliant education, according to the ideas of her world. The best music-masters made her a very tolerable performer; she could wash in a water-color drawing very neatly; she danced to perfection; she had learned her own language and history, geography, English, Italian—in short, everything that constitutes a lady-like education. Of medium height and rather flat, she was unfortunately short-sighted; neither pretty nor plain, she had a fair, bright complexion, but she had not a notion of fine manners. She had a good deal of restrained feeling, and her godfather, godmother, Mademoiselle Thuillier, and Colleville himself were unanimous on this point—a mother's anchor of hope—that Céleste could feel a strong

attachment. One of her chief beauties was magnificent light-brown hair; but her hands and feet showed common blood.

The girl was engaging for her admirable virtues; she was genuinely kind, simple, and sweet; she loved her father and mother, and would have sacrificed herself for them. Brought up in the deepest admiration for her godparents, alike by Brigitte,—who made her call her Aunt Brigitte,—by Madame Thuillier, and by her mother, who was on constantly intimate terms with the old "buck" of the Empire, Céleste had the loftiest ideas of the retired second clerk. The house in the Rue Saint-Dominique impressed her as much as the Château of the Tuileries impresses a courtier of the new dynasty.

Thuillier had not withstood the rolling-mill action of administrative routine which wears the brains thin in proportion as they are beaten out. Exhausted by monotonous work as well as by his successes as a "lady's man," he had lost his best faculties by the time he settled in the Rue Saint-Dominique; but his drawn features, bearing a slightly arrogant expression mixed with the self-satisfaction that might have been the fatuity of a superior clerk, made the deepest impression on Céleste. She alone adored that colorless face. She knew that she was the delight of the Thuillier household.

The Collevilles and their children very naturally formed the nucleus of the society which Mademoiselle Thuillier's ambition aimed at collecting about her brother. A retired clerk of la Billardière's division, who had for thirty years been living in the Saint-Jacques quarter of the city, Monsieur Phellion, now a major of the National Guard, was recognized at the first review by the retired collector and second clerk. Phellion was one of the most highly respected men in the district. He had one daughter, formerly a teacher in the Lagrave school for girls, and now married to Monsieur Barniol, a professor in the Rue Saint-Hyacinthe.

Phellion's eldest son was mathematical master in a public school. He gave lessons, coached pupils, and devoted himself, as his father expressed it, to pure mathematics. The second son was studying in the Civil Engineering College.

Phellion had a pension of nine hundred francs, and a few hundred francs of interest on his savings and his wife's during thirty years of hard work and privations. He was also the owner of the little house, with a garden attached, in which he lived in the Impasse des Feuillantines. In thirty years he had never once spoken of this alley, which was no thoroughfare, by the old-fashioned term, *cul-de-sac*.

Dutocq, clerk to a justice of the peace, had been an employé in the Exchequer office. He had been the victim on one of those occasions which now and then are a necessity under a representative government, and had consented to be the scapegoat in a scandalous case discovered by the commissioners of the budget, for which he was secretly paid a fairly round sum; this had enabled him to purchase his place as a clerk of the Court. This man, whose credit was low as an office spy, was not received as he thought was his due by the Thuilliers; but the coldness of his landlord was just what made him persist in his visits.

He was unmarried, and indulged his vices; he carefully concealed his mode of life and knew how to flatter his superiors. The magistrate, his master, had a high opinion of Dutocq. This shameless individual made himself tolerated by the Thuilliers by mean and gross adulation, which never fails of its effect. He knew every detail of Thuillier's life, of his intimacy with Colleville, and yet more with Madame Colleville. They were afraid of that formidable tongue, and the Thuilliers endured him without admitting him to familiarity.

The family that presently became the flower of the Thuillier's drawing-room was that of a poor clerk who had been the object of pity in the office, and who, driven by penury, had thrown up his place in 1827 to go into trade—with an idea.

Minard foresaw a fortune in one of those atrocious devices which disgrace French trade, but which in 1827 had not yet been blown on by publicity. Minard bought tea and mixed it with dried tea leaves that had already been used; then he adulterated chocolate to an extent that allowed of his selling it cheap. This retail business in colonial produce, first started in the Saint-Marcel quarter, set Minard up in trade; he established a factory, and through his connections was now able to procure the unmanufactured article from the producer; thus he could carry on honestly and on an extensive scale the business he had begun in such a shady way.

He set up a distillery; vast quantities of imported raw material passed through his hands, and in 1835 he was considered to be one of the richest traders in the neighborhood of the Place Maubert. He had bought one of the handsome residences in the Rue des Maçons Sorbonne; he had already been the deputy mayor, and in 1839 was elected mayor of that district and assessor of the Chamber of Commerce. He kept a carriage and had a country house near Lagny; his wife wore diamonds at the Court balls, and he flaunted the rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honor in his buttonhole.

Minard and his wife were moreover exceedingly liberal to the poor; perhaps they wished to restore to them retail all they extracted wholesale from the public.

Phellion, Colleville, and Thuillier came across Minard at election time, and the result was an acquaintance which soon became intimate because Madame Zélie Minard seemed enchanted to introduce her "young lady" to Céleste Colleville.

Céleste made her entry into society at the age of sixteen and a half, at a fine ball given by the Minards, dressed as beseemed her name, which seemed of good augury for her life. Delighted to be the friend of Mademoiselle Minard, who was four years her senior, she persuaded her godfather and her father to cultivate the Minards, in whose gilded

and gorgeous rooms many political celebrities of the *"Juste Milieu"* (the Happy Medium) were wont to meet: Monsieur Popinot, afterwards Minister of Commerce; Cochu, now Baron Cochu, previously a clerk in the Clergeot division of the Exchequer office, and a large shareholder in a grocery business, was as much the oracle of the Lombards and the Bourdonnais quarters as his ally, Monsieur Anselme Popinot.

Minard's eldest son was a pleader, whose ambition it was to step into the shoes of those advocates whose political opinions should have weaned them from appearing in Court since 1830; he was the genius of the family, and his mother, no less than his father, hoped to see him well married. Zélie Minard, once an artificial-flower maker, was filled with an ardent yearning towards higher social spheres, and hoped to enter there by the marriage of her son and daughter; while Minard, more prudent than his wife, and imbued with a sense of the power of the middle classes in the state which had resulted from the revolution of July, looked only for fortune. He haunted the Thuilliers' house to pick up information as to Céleste's prospects as an heiress.

He, like Dutocq and Phellion, had heard the scandal that had been rumored as to the Thulliers' intimacy with Flavie, and he had not failed to note their devotion to their god-daughter.

Dutocq, eager to be received by the Minards, toadied them grossly. When Minard, the Rothschild of his *arrondissement*, came first to the Thuilliers', he compared him, almost wittily, to Napoleon, seeing him now burly, fat, and flourishing, when he had last known him, in the office, lean, pale, and sickly.

"When you were in la Billardière's division," said he, "you were like Napoleon before the 18th *Brumaire;* now I see a Napoleon of the Empire."

Minard, however, met him coldly and did not ask him to his house; thus he made a mortal enemy of the malignant law clerk.

Monsieur and Madame Phellion, worthy couple as they

were, could not help indulging in calculations and hopes. It struck them that Céleste was the very thing for their son, the professor; so to make a little faction in the Thuillier drawing-room, they introduced their son-in-law, Monsieur Barniol, a man well thought of in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, an official of long standing in the Mairie, and their intimate ally, whom Colleville had in a way ousted from his place, when Monsieur Laudigeois, for twenty years a clerk in the Mairie, was hoping, as the reward of his long services, for the secretaryship obtained by Colleville.

Thus the Phellions formed a phalanx of seven, all fairly faithful to each other; the Colleville faction was not less numerous, so that sometimes, on a Sunday, there would be not less than thirty persons in the Thuilliers' drawing-room. Thuillier renewed his acquaintance with the Saillards, the Baudoyers, and the Falleix, all people of importance in the Place Royale quarter, and frequently invited them to dinner.

Among the women Madame Colleville was the most important personage of this circle, as the younger Minard and Phellion, the professor, were its superior men; for all the rest, men devoid of ideas or culture and risen from the lower ranks, were typical of the absurdities of the inferior middle classes. Although a fortune made in the past seems to imply some form of merit, Minard was but an inflated balloon. He overflowed in long-drawn sentences, took obsequiousness for politeness and ready-made phrases for wit, and would utter commonplaces with such airs and mouthing as got them accepted as eloquence. A certain set of words which mean nothing and answer every purpose—progress, steam, asphalt, the National Guard, order, democratic influences, coöperative spirit, legality, motion and resistance, intimidation—seemed at every political crisis to have been invented for Minard, who then paraphrased the text of his newspaper.

Julien Minard, the lawyer, suffered under his father as much as his father suffered under his wife. Zélie, in fact, with improved fortunes, had assumed pretensions, though

she could never learn to speak her own language; she had grown fat, and in her handsome attire she looked like a cook married to her master.

Phellion, the very ideal of a middle-class citizen, had an equal share of virtues and absurdities. As a subordinate, during his official career, he held social superiority in high respect. He kept silence in the presence of Minard. He had weathered the crisis of superannuation very successfully, and this was how. The worthy man had never had a chance of indulging his tastes. His love was for the city of Paris; he took the utmost interest in the new streets and improvements; he was the man to stand for two hours on end in front of a house that was being pulled down. He might be seen planted squarely on his feet, his nose in the air, watching for the fall of a stone that a mason was dislodging with a crowbar from the top of a wall, never budging till the block came down; and when all was over he would go off as pleased as an academician at the damning of a romantic play. Such men—Phellion, Laudigeois, and the like, the true supernumeraries of the world's stage—fill the place of the antique chorus. They weep when others weep, laugh when they are expected to laugh, and sing in chorus over public disasters and public rejoicings, exulting where they stand apart at the victories of Algiers, Constantine, Lisbon, and Saint Juan de Ulloa; grieving impartially over the death of Napoleon and the fatal disasters of Saint-Merri and the Rue Transnonnain; mourning for the famous men of whom they know least.

Phellion, however, showed two faces; he was conscientiously divided between the reasoning of the opposition and that of the government. But if there was any street fighting, Phellion was brave enough to declare himself in the face of the neighbors; he went forth to the Place Saint-Michel, the parade-ground of his regiment; he pitied the government, but he did his duty. Before and during a riot he would support the reigning dynasty, the outcome of the revolution of July; but when the political trials came on he was on the side of the culprits.

These weather-cock opinions, harmless enough, also pervaded his political views: the "Colossus of the North" was answerable for everything; England, like the old *Constitutionnel* newspaper, was in his arguments a stalking-horse on both sides, and by turn "Machiavellian Albion" and a model country,—Machiavellian with regard to the insulted interests of France and Napoleon; a model country when the French government was to be criticised. Agreeing with the newspaper, he recognized the democratic element, but in conversation he would come to no terms with the Republican spirit—the "Republican Spirit" meaning 1793, the Revolution, the Reign of Terror, the agrarian law; the Democratic Element being the development of the middle classes—the reign of Phellion.

This excellent old man was always dignified; dignity was the keyword of his life. He brought up his children with dignity; he was always the father in their eyes; he insisted on being respected at home, as he honored power and the authorities. He never had a debt. On a jury his conscience made him sweat blood and water while following the debates on a trial, and he never laughed, not even when the Court laughed, and the bench, and the public authorities. Always ready to oblige, he would give care, time, everything but money.

Félix Phellion, his son, the professor, was his idol; he believed him capable of winning a seat in the Academy of Sciences.

Thuillier, between the impudent stupidity of Minard and the blunt imbecility of Phellion, was like a neutral element, but there was something of both in him from his melancholy experience. He hid the vacuity of his brain under the commonplace, just as he covered the parchment skin of his head under the thin wisps of gray hair that were artfully brought over from the back by the hairdresser's comb.

"In any other walk of life," he would say, speaking of official work, "I should have made infinitely more money."

He had seen what was right and possible in theory and

impossible in practice; he had seen results contradict the premises; he would relate all the injustice and intrigues of the Rabourdin affair.

"After that," he would say, "what is one to believe? everything or nothing? A very queer thing is government, and I am happy in not having a son, so that I cannot see him going through the rush for place."

Colleville, always cheerful, jovial, good-fellow-well-met, always joking and inventing anagrams, always in a bustle, the typical citizen meddler and mocker, represented ability that cannot succeed, and persistent hard work without any result, but also a sort of rollicking resignation, narrow views, art wasted—for he was a capital musician, and now no longer played but to please his daughter.

So the Thuilliers' drawing-room was a sort of provincial *Salon,* lighted up by reflections from the perpetual Paris glare; its mediocrity and platitude kept pace behind the torrent of the age. The word and the thing in fashion—for in Paris the word and the thing are like the horse and its rider—were never felt there but by a ricochet. Monsieur Minard was impatiently awaited as a man who, on great occasions, would certainly know the truth.

The women of the Thuillier circle were all for the Jesuits; the men defended the University; generally the women were content to listen. A man of any wit, if he could have endured the tedium of these evenings, would have laughed as heartily as at a comedy by Molière to hear a long discussion ending in some such speech as this:

"Could the Revolution of 1789 have been averted? Louis XIV.'s loans had prepared the way for it. Louis XV., an egoist, a man devoted to ceremonial—(it was he who said, 'If I were at the head of the Police I would prohibit cabriolets'), a dissolute king (you know all about his *Parc aux Cerfs*), contributed largely to open the yawning gulf of revolution. Monsieur de Necker, a malignant Genevese, gave the last shock. Foreigners have always owed France a grudge. The *Maximum* did infinite mischief. In equity

Louis XVI. ought not to have been condemned; a jury would have acquitted him. Why was Charles X. overthrown? Napoleon was a great man and the details that prove his genius belong to the domain of anecdote: he would take five pinches of snuff per minute, and kept it loose in his waistcoat pockets, which were lined with leather. He looked over all the bills; he used to go to the Rue Saint-Denis to learn the price of things. Talma was his friend; Talma taught him all his gestures, and yet he always refused to give Talma the Legion of Honor. The Emperor once stood sentry for a soldier who had fallen asleep, and so saved him from being shot. Such things as that made his men adore him. Louis XVIII., though he was a clever man, showed a great want of justice towards him when he called him Monsieur de Bonaparte. The fault of the present government is that, instead of leading, it submits to be led. It has taken its stand too low; it is afraid of men of energy; it ought to have torn the treaties of 1815 across and demanded the Rhine of Europe. They shift the same men too often in the ministry."

"There, you have been clever enough for one time," Mademoiselle Thuillier would say at the end of these brilliant reflections. "The altar is prepared; come and play your little game."

And the old maid always closed these discussions, which bored the women, by making this suggestion.

If all these facts and generalizations had not been given by way of "argument" to afford an idea of the setting of this drama and the spirit of this little world, the drama itself would perhaps have suffered. The sketch is historically accurate, and depicts a social stratum of no small importance in the chronicle of manners, especially when we remember that the youngest branch of the dynasty took it for its fulcrum.

The winter of 1839 was, in some ways, the culminating hour of glory for the Thuilliers' salon. The Minards ap-

peared there almost every Sunday; they began by spending an hour there when they were obliged to go on to other friends, and then Minard commonly left his wife there, taking his daughter with him and his eldest son, the lawyer. This constant civility on the Minards' part was the direct outcome of a meeting, long postponed, between Métivier, Barbet, and Minard, one evening when these two important tenants had remained later than usual to chat with Mademoiselle Thuillier. Minard then heard from Barbet that the old maid took from him about thirty thousand francs in bills at six months, at seven and a half per cent per annum; and that she took as much paper from Métivier, so that she must have at least a hundred and eighty thousand francs in her hands.

"I lend on books at twelve per cent and take none but the best names; nothing can suit me better," said Barbet in conclusion. "I say she must have a hundred and eighty thousand francs, for she can only give bills at ninety days at the Bank."

"Then she has an account at the Bank?"

"I think so," said Barbet.

Minard, who had a friend on the Board, learned that Mademoiselle Thuillier had an account there to the extent of about two hundred thousand francs, guaranteed by a deposit of forty shares. This security, it was added, was in fact unnecessary; the Bank would be willing to oblige a person so well known there, and the responsible manager for Céleste Lemprun, the daughter of a clerk who had seen as many years' service as the Bank had existed. In twenty years Mademoiselle Brigitte had never overdrawn her account. She always paid in sixty thousand francs a month in bills at three months, which came to about a hundred and sixty thousand. The securities in shares deposited represented a hundred and twenty thousand francs; there was therefore no risk, for the bills were always worth sixty thousand francs. "Indeed," the bank director said, "if she should, in the third month, send us in a hundred thousand

francs' worth of bills we would not refuse one. She has a house of her own which is not mortgaged and is worth more than a hundred thousand francs. And all the bills come through Barbet or Métivier, and have four names on the back including hers."

"Why does Mademoiselle Thuillier work so hard?" Minard asked Métivier. "Why, she is the very wife for you," he added.

"Oh, I can do better by marrying one of my cousins," said Métivier. "My Uncle Métivier has promised me the goodwill of his concern; he has a hundred thousand francs a year in the funds, and only two daughters."

However secret Mademoiselle Thuillier might be, saying nothing to anybody of her investments; and although she absorbed into one lump sum all she saved out of Madame Thuillier's fortune as well as her own, it was hardly possible but that a ray of light should at last pierce through the bushel under which she hid her treasure.

Dutocq, who was always with Barbet—and there was more than one point of resemblance in their characters and physiognomy,—had estimated the Thuilliers' savings more accurately than Minard, at a hundred and fifty thousand francs in 1838, and he could secretly keep a keen eye on their increase by calculating the profits by the help of Barbet, a practised discounter.

"Céleste will have two hundred thousand francs from us, money down," said the old maid in confidence to Barbet, "and Madame Thuillier will settle on her at her marriage the reversion of all her property. My will is made. My brother will have a life-interest in everything, but Céleste will have the reversion. Monsieur Cardot, my lawyer, is my executor."

Mademoiselle Thuillier had then persuaded her brother to renew his old acquaintanceship with the Saillards, the Baudoyers, and the Falleix, who held a position analogous to that of the Thuilliers and the Minards, in the Saint-Antoine quarter, where Monsieur Saillard was mayor of the district.

Cardot, the notary, had introduced a suitor for the hand of Céleste in the person of Maître Godeschal, attorney-at-law, and Derville's successor, a man of six-and-thirty, a very clever fellow, who had paid a hundred thousand francs on account for his connection, a debt which two hundred thousand francs with his wife would clear off. But Minard got rid of Godeschal by telling Mademoiselle Thuillier that Céleste's sister-in-law would be the famous opera-dancer, Mariette.

"*She* came out of that," said Colleville, speaking of his wife, "and has no idea of going back again."

"Besides, Monsieur Godeschal is too old for Céleste," said Brigitte.

"And then," Madame Thuillier suggested timidly, "ought we not to allow her to marry a man of her own choice and to be happy?"

The good woman had discerned in Félix Phellion a true affection for Céleste—love such as a woman might have dreamed of, who had been crushed by Brigitte and hurt by Thuillier's indifference, for he cared no more for his wife than for one of the servant-girls; love, bold at heart but shy on the surface, strong in itself but timid, concentrated before men and expanding in the skies. At three-and-twenty Félix Phellion was a gentle, simple-minded man, as learned men are who cultivate knowledge for its own sake. He had been wholesomely brought up by his father, who, taking everything very seriously, had set him a good example in all respects, supporting it by trivial axioms. He was a youth of medium height, with light, chestnut-brown hair, gray eyes, and a much-freckled complexion; his voice was charming, his demeanor quiet, his manner rather dreamy; he gesticulated very little, never talked nonsense, contradicted nobody, and was incapable of a sordid thought or a selfish speculation.

"That is the sort of man I should have liked my husband to be!" Madame Thuillier had often said to herself.

One evening in the month of February 1840 the various

persons whose figures have just been sketched were assembled in the Thuilliers' drawing-room. It was near the end of the month. Métivier and Barbet, who each wanted to borrow thirty thousand francs from Mademoiselle Thuillier, were playing whist with Phellion and Monsieur Minard. At another table sat Julien—"Julien the Advocate," as Colleville called the younger Minard—Madame Colleville, Monsieur Barniol, and Madame Phellion. A game of *bouillotte,* at five sous points, engaged the attention of Madame Minard, who knew no other game, of Colleville, old Saillard, and his son-in-law, Baudoyer. Laudigeois and Dutocq looked on to cut in in the place of the losers; Mesdames Falleix, Baudoyer, and Barniol were playing boston with Mademoiselle Minard; Céleste and Prudence Minard were sitting together. Young Phellion, while listening to Madame Thuillier, could gaze at Céleste.

At the other side of the fireplace the Queen Elizabeth of the family sat enthroned, as plainly dressed as when she was thirty, for prosperity could not make her alter any of her habits. On her chinchilla-gray hair she wore a black gauze cap with a spray of *Charles X.* geranium flowers; her gown of plum-red stuff had cost perhaps fifteen francs; an embroidered collar worth six francs scarcely covered the deep hollow left between the muscles that attach the head to the spine. Monvel, when he acted the part of Augustus in his later days, had not a sterner profile than this autocrat who sat knitting socks for her brother.

In front of the fire stood Thuillier, ready to receive all newcomers, and by his side stood a young man who had produced a great effect when the porter, arrayed on Sundays in his best coat to play the man-servant, announced "Monsieur Olivier Vinet."

A confidential hint from Cardot to the famous public prosecutor, the young lawyer's father, had led to this visit. Olivier Vinet had just been promoted from the assize court of Arcis-sur-Aube to a place in Paris as the attorney-general's deputy. Cardot, the notary, had invited Thuillier to

dinner to meet the public prosecutor, who seemed likely to be made Minister of Justice, and his son. Cardot estimated the present value of the money to be left to Céleste at seven hundred thousand francs at least. Vinet junior had seemed delighted at the prospect of being admitted as a Sunday guest at the Thuilliers'. Large fortunes lead to great and unblushing follies nowadays.

Ten minutes later, another young man who was talking to Thuillier before Vinet's arrival raised his voice in the heat of a vehement political discussion, compelling the lawyer to do the same in the eagerness of the debate. The subject in question was the vote which had led to the overthrow by the lower Chamber of the Ministry of the 12th May, by their refusal to grant the sum of money asked for the Duc de Nemours.

"I am most decidedly very far from being an adherent of the dynastic view," said this young man, "and I am far from approving the advent to power of the citizen class. The middle classes have no more right now to exclusive pre-eminence in the state than the aristocracy had of old. However, the French middle classes took upon themselves to create a new dynasty, a royal family of their own, and this is how they treat it! When the nation allowed Napoleon to raise himself, he created, with himself, a magnificent and monumental edifice; he was proud of its greatness, and generously spent his blood and the sweat of his brow to constitute the Empire. The citizen classes, between the splendors of aristocratic sovereignty and of the Imperial purple, are squalid; they drag down the powers that be to their own level instead of rising to them. They practise the same economy of candle-ends on their princes as they do in their back-shops; but what is a virtue there is a blunder and a crime in high places. There are many things I could desire for the people, but I would not have cut ten millions off the new civil list. The citizen class, now that it is almost all-powerful in France, ought to secure the happiness of the people,—splendor without lavishness and grandeur without privilege."

Olivier Vinet's father was at that time out of conceit with the government: the robes of a Keeper of the Seals, his great ambition, had not yet fallen on his shoulders. So the young deputy judge did not know what to answer, and he thought it would be wise to take up one side of the question.

"You are right, monsieur," said he. "But before it thinks of display the citizen class has a duty to the country. The luxury of which you speak comes after duty. The decision you think so wrong was a necessity at the moment. The Chamber is far from having its fair share of influence; the Ministers work less for France than for the Crown, and Parliament wished to see a Ministry which, as in England, had a power of its own, not a mere borrowed weight. As soon as the Ministry acts independently, and represents the Chamber of Commons in the executive power of the country, as the Chamber represents the people, Parliament will be very liberal to the Crown. That is the marrow of the matter, and I merely state it without any expression of personal opinion, since my duty in my office requires a sort of fealty to the Sovereign in political questions."

"Apart from the political question," replied the other, whose accent betrayed him as a son of Provence, "it cannot be disputed that the middle classes have misunderstood their task. We see public prosecutors, presidents of the law courts, peers of the upper Chamber riding in omnibuses, judges living on their salaries, préfets without any private means, Ministers in debt. Now the citizen class, having taken possession of all these places, ought to do honor to them, as the aristocracy did; and instead of holding them as a means to making a fortune, as many scandalous trials have proved, they should fill them with dignity and due expenditure——"

"Who can this young fellow be?" Olivier Vinet wondered as he listened. "Is he a relation? Cardot really ought to have come with me the first time."

"Who is that little man?" Minard asked Barbet. "I have seen him here several times."

"A tenant," replied Métivier, dealing the cards.

"An advocate," said Barbet, in an undertone. "He has small rooms on the third floor, to the front. Oh! he is no great things, and he has no money."

"What is that young man's name?" Vinet inquired of Thuillier.

"Théodose de la Peyrade, an advocate," whispered Thuillier in reply.

At this moment, every one, men and women alike, were looking at the two young men, and Mme. Minard could not help saying to Colleville:

"He is a very good-looking young fellow."

"I have made an anagram of his name," said Céleste's papa, "and the letters of Charles Marie Théodose de la Peyrade spell his prophecy: *Eh, Monsieur payera de la dot, des oies et le char.*—Take care, my dear Madame Minard, not to give him your daughter!"

"People think that young fellow better looking than my son," said Madame Phellion to Madame Colleville. "What do you think?"

"Oh, so far as looks go," replied Madame Colleville, "a woman might hesitate before making a choice."

At this stage Olivier Vinet, looking round at this roomful of middle-class citizens, thought it would be clever to cry up the class, and he threw himself into agreement with the young Provençal, saying that the men who enjoyed the confidence of the Government ought certainly to imitate the King, whose splendor far surpassed that of the old Court; and that to try to save out of the emoluments of an appointment was monstrous. Besides, how was it possible in Paris, where everything cost three times as much as of old, where, for instance, rooms fit for a judge to live in cost three thousand francs in rent?

"My father," said he in conclusion, "allows me a thousand crowns a year, and with my salary I can scarcely make both ends meet decently." As the young lawyer cantered off on this treacherous ground, the Provençal, who had so ingeniously led him up to it, gave Dutocq an undetected

wink just as he was about to take his turn at the game of *bouillotte*.

"And there is such a demand for places," said Dutocq, "that there is some talk of appointing two magistrates to each *arrondissement*, so as to have twelve more courts. As if they could tamper with our dues, with our offices so exorbitantly paid for!"

"I have not yet had the pleasure of hearing you speak in Court," said Vinet to Monsieur de la Peyrade.

"I am the advocate of the poor. I only plead in the lower courts," replied the Provençal.

On hearing the young lawyer's views as to the necessity for spending one's income, Mademoiselle Thuillier had assumed a primly ceremonious look, of which the Provençal and Dutocq well knew the meaning. Vinet presently left, with Minard and Julien, so that the field of battle in front of the hearth was left to la Peyrade and Dutocq.

"The upper citizen class," said Dutocq to Thuillier, "will act as the aristocracy were wont to act. The nobility looked for rich girls to improve their lands; the parvenus of to-day want handsome settlements to feather their nest."

"Just what Monsieur Thuillier was saying this morning," said the Provençal with bold mendacity.

"Vinet's father," said Dutocq, "married a Demoiselle de Chargebœuf and has assumed aristocratic opinions; he must have money at any cost; his wife keeps up a princely style."

"Oh!" said Thuillier, roused to the envy of his class of each other, "turn such folks out of their places, and down they go to the mud they rose from!"

Mademoiselle Thuillier was knitting at such a pace that she might have been a machine driven by steam.

"Now you come in, Monsieur Dutocq," said Madame Minard, rising. "My feet are cold," she added, coming to the fire, the gold tinsel in her turban twinkling like fireworks in the light of the hanging lamp that vainly strove to illuminate the spacious room.

"He is but an innocent—that sucking judge," said Madame Minard, glancing at Mademoiselle Thuillier.

"An innocent! did you say?" observed la Peyrade. "That, madame, is very witty——"

"But we are used to hearing witty things from Madame Minard," said "handsome Thuillier."

Madame Colleville was studying the Provençal, and comparing him with young Phellion, who was talking to Céleste, neither of them noticing what was going on around them. And this is certainly a good opportunity for describing the singular man who was destined to play an important part in the Thuilliers' circle, and who certainly deserves to be called a great actor.

There is in Provence, and especially in the river-port of Avignon, a race of men with fair or chestnut-brown hair, delicate complexion, and almost weak eyes, their expression being soft, calm, and languishing, rather than fiery, eager, and deep, as the eyes of Southerners so commonly are. It may be observed incidentally that among the Corsicans, a race peculiarly subject to fits of fury and dangerous rages, fair men are often to be seen, of apparently passive character. These fair-complexioned men, apt to be stout, with a somewhat watery eye, greenish or blue, are the worst kind of Provençal, and Charles Marie Théodose de la Peyrade was a good specimen of the type whose constitution would repay careful study from the point of view of medical science and philosophical physiology. There is in them a sort of bile, a bitter gall, easily stirred, which mounts to their brain and makes them capable of the fiercest deeds, done apparently in cold blood. This obscure violence, the result of a sort of spontaneous intoxication, is irreconcilable with their almost lymphatic exterior and the tranquillity of their benign expression.

Young la Peyrade, born near Avignon, was of medium height and well proportioned if rather stout; his complexion was dull—not livid, not pale, not florid, but gelatinous

for that is the only word that can give a clear idea of the soft colorless material that covered sinews not indeed vigorous but capable of immense endurance under certain conditions; his eyes, coldly blue, commonly wore a deceptive expression of melancholy which had, no doubt, a great charm for women. His well-shaped forehead did not lack nobleness, and was agreeably finished by fine, light chestnut hair, thin, and with a very slight natural curl at the ends. His nose, exactly like that of a sporting dog, broad, cleft at the tip, inquisitive, intelligent, prying, always on the alert, had no touch of good-nature, but was ironical and sarcastic; but this side of his nature was rarely seen; it was only when he was off his guard and flew into a rage that the young man found it in him to vent the wit and satire that envenomed his diabolical jesting.

His lips, cut in a pleasing curve and as red as a pomegranate flower, were the marvelous instrument of a voice of which the medium tones were almost musical, and Théodose generally spoke in that register; the higher notes rang out like a gong. That falsetto was indeed the voice of his nerves, of his anger. His face, resolutely expressionless, was oval in shape; and his manner, in harmony with the priestly calm of his features, was stamped with reserve and propriety. At the same time there was a smooth gentleness in his demeanor; and without being servile or wheedling, it had a certain attraction which it was difficult to account for in his absence. Charm, when it has its source in feeling, leaves a deep impression; but when it is the outcome of artifice, like spurious eloquence, it enjoys but a temporary triumph; it strives for effect at any cost. But how many philosophers are there in the world who can compare and judge? By the time ordinary people have discovered the way it is done, the trick is played—to use a vulgar phrase.

Everything in this youth of seven-and-twenty was in harmony with the part and character he had assumed; he carried out his natural bent by cultivating philanthropy, the only expression that can account for philanthropists.

Théodose loved the populace; for he particularized his love of humanity. Just as the horticulturists devote themselves to roses, dahlias, pinks, or geraniums, caring nothing for any species which is not their special hobby, this young la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt was the slave of the workmen, the poorest classes, the paupers of the Saint-Jacques and Saint-Marceau quarters. The capable men, genius at bay, the decent poor of the middle class, he would not admit into Charity's fold.

In all maniacs the heart is very like the boxes with divisions in which sugar-plums are packed in sorted colors. *Suum cuique tribuere* is their motto. They dole out duty by measure. There are philanthropists who have pity only on the sins of condemned criminals. Vanity, of course, is at the root of philanthropy, but in our Provençal it was deliberate calculation, a part to be played, a form of hypocrisy, liberal and democratic, and affected with such perfection as no actor could achieve. He did not attack the rich; he was content simply not to understand them, to suffer them to exist; every man, according to him, must enjoy the fruit of his labors. He had been, he would own, a fervent disciple of Saint-Simon, but this was an error to be ascribed to his extreme youth; modern society could only be based on heredity.

Like all the natives of his province he was a devout churchman; he attended early Mass, and concealed his piety. He was sordidly parsimonious, as almost all philanthropists are, and gave nothing to the poor but his time, his advice, his eloquence, and such money as he could wring for them from the wealthy.

He wore boots, and dressed in black, which he wore till the seams were white.

Nature had greatly favored Théodose by not bestowing on him that refined and manly beauty of the South, which leads the world to imaginary demands, such as it is more than difficult for any man to fulfil. He found it so easy to please,

that, as the mood prompted him, he could be delightfully attractive or quite commonplace.

Never before, since his introduction to the Thuilliers, had he ventured to raise his voice and assume such a magisterial air as he had done this evening to Olivier Vinet; but perhaps Théodose de la Peyrade had not been sorry to try to get out of the shade he had hitherto sat in; besides, it was necessary to shake off this young deputy judge, just as the Minards had previously got rid of Godeschal, the attorney. Like all superior men—for he did not lack intellect—Vinet had not stooped low enough to discern the threads of these vulgar spider's webs, and had rushed like a fly, head foremost, into the almost invisible snare into which Théodose had drawn him by such wiliness as a cleverer man than Olivier might not have suspected.

To finish this portrait of the "advocate of the poor" it will be well to relate the beginnings of his intimacy with the Thuilliers.

Théodose had come to Paris towards the end of 1837; he had been practising as an attorney for five years, and he now went through his terms to become a pleader; but some unrevealed circumstances, as to which he was silent, had hindered him from getting his name duly registered in Paris, and he still ranked as a licentiate. However, having established himself in his little rooms on the third floor, with the furniture indispensable to the practice of his noble profession—for the order of advocates will not recognize a new Brother if he has not a suitable office, a library, and all things seemly and ostensible—Théodose de la Peyrade became a pleader at the Court of Assize in Paris.

The whole of the year 1838 was devoted to effecting this change of position, and he led a perfectly regular life. In the morning he studied at home till dinner-time, occasionally going into Court to listen to important cases. Having made friends with Dutocq—with great difficulty as Dutocq declared,—he helped certain poor folks in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, whom Dutocq recommended to his charity,

by arguing their cases; he secured them the interest of solicitors, who, in accordance with the statutes of their association, take it in turns to defend the cause of the impecunious; and by never taking any but perfectly secure cases he won them all. Thus making a connection with a few solicitors he became known to his fellow-pleaders by these praiseworthy efforts, so that a certain degree of notoriety attended his admission first to the debating society of his fellow-pleaders, and then as a registered member of the Paris bar. After that he was the regular advocate of the poor in the lower courts, and always the protector of the common people.

His humble clients expressed their gratitude and admiration in the porter's lodges in spite of the young lawyer's injunctions, and a good many facts were carried up to the masters. The Thuilliers, delighted to have so excellent and charitable a man as a tenant, were eager to attract him as a visitor, and questioned Dutocq about him. Dutocq spoke in the tone of the envious, and, while doing the young man justice, he added that he was singularly parsimonious, though that indeed might be the effect of his poverty.

"I have, however, made inquiries about him. He belongs to the de la Peyrades, an old family of the County of Avignon; he came to Paris at the end of 1829 to find an uncle who was supposed to have a large fortune; he finally discovered this relative's residence three days after the old man's death, and the sale of the furniture just sufficed to pay the funeral expenses and debts. Some friend of this very inefficient uncle presented the fortune-seeking youth with a hundred louis, advising him to study for the bar and to aim at the higher walks of the law. On those hundred louis he lived for more than three years in Paris, faring like an anchorite; but as he could never see nor trace his unknown benefactor, by 1833 he was in the greatest distress.

"Then, like all licentiates of law, he dabbled in politics and literature, and supported himself for some time just above utter misery; for he had nothing to look for from his family, as his father, the youngest brother of the uncle who died in

the Rue des Moineaux, has eleven children, all living on a small property called Canquoëlles.

"He finally got on the staff of a ministerial journal edited by the famous Cérizet, so well known for the persecution he endured at the time of the Restoration for his liberal views, while the men of the Left cannot now forgive him for having gone over to the ministerialists. Since in these days the authorities do little enough to protect even their most devoted adherents, as was seen in the case of Gisquet, the republicans succeeded at last in ruining Cérizet. This is merely to account for Cérizet's now being a copying clerk in my office.

"Well, at the time when he was still flourishing, as the editor of a newspaper controlled by the Perier Ministry in antagonism to such incendiary papers as the *Tribune* and others, Cérizet—who is really a very good fellow, only too fond of women, good living, and dissipation—was very helpful to Théodose, who did the political articles; and but for Casimir-Perier's death the young lawyer would have been appointed deputy judge in Paris. In 1834-1835 he was again in very low water, in spite of his talents, for his employment on a ministerial paper told against him. 'But for my religious principles,' he said to me at that time, 'I should have thrown myself into the river.'

"At last it would seem that his uncle's friend heard that he was in want; money enough was sent to him to enable him to pass as a pleader; but even now he knows neither the name of his mysterious patron nor his place of residence. After all, in such circumstances thrift is excusable, and a man must have a great deal of character to refuse the payment offered by the poor devils whose causes he gains by his assistance. It is disgraceful to see men speculating on the impossibility for the poor of standing the costs of an action unjustly brought. Yes, he will get on! I should not be surprised to see that young fellow rise to a brilliant position. He is tenacious, honest, and courageous. He studies—studies hard."

In spite of the favor with which he was welcomed, Maître la Peyrade did not go too often to the Thuilliers, at first.

Taxed with reserve, he went more frequently, and at last was a regular Sunday visitor, invited to all their dinners, and so intimate in their house that if he happened to call on Thuillier at about four o'clock he was always kept to share pot-luck, without ceremony, and Mademoiselle Thuillier would say to herself:

"Then we are sure of his having a good meal, poor young man!"

A social phenomenon, which must certainly have been observed, but which has not yet been formulated and published, though it deserves to be recorded, is a return to the habits, jokes, and manners of their original state in life in certain folks, who from youth to age have raised themselves above it. Thus, in mind and manners, Thuillier had relapsed into the porter's son; he would repeat his father's jests, and at last, in his declining years, allowed some of the mud of his early youth to come to the surface.

About five or six times a year, when the soup was good, he would say, as if it were quite a new remark, as he placed his spoon in the empty plate:

"That is better than a dig in the eye with a burned stick!"

The first time Théodose heard this speech, which was new to him, it upset his gravity, and he laughed so heartily that Thuillier, handsome Thuillier, felt his vanity more tickled than it had ever been. After that, Théodose always responded to the pleasantry with a knowing smile.

This little detail will explain how it was that on the very morning of the day when he had his sparring match with Olivier Vinet, he had happened to say to Thuillier, as they walked round the garden to look at the effects of the frost:

"You are far wittier than you fancy."

And had received this answer:

"In any other career, my dear Théodose, I should have come to the front; but the Emperor's overthrow broke my neck."

"Time is yet before you," said the young lawyer. "Why, what has that mountebank Colleville done to deserve the Cross?"

And here Maître de la Peyrade had laid his finger on the sore that Thuillier hid from every eye, so effectually indeed that even his sister knew it not; but this young fellow, whose interest it was to study all the citizen class, had guessed the secret envy eating into the ex-clerk's heart.

"If you, with all your experience, will do me the honor of being guided by my advice," the philanthropist went on, "and above all will never breathe a word of our compact without my consent, not even to your admirable sister, I will undertake to get you the Legion of Honor with the acclamations of all the district."

"Oh! if only we could do that," Thuillier had exclaimed, "you cannot think what I would not do for you!"

And this explains why Thuillier had drawn himself up pompously when Théodose had been so audacious as to lend him an opinion.

In the arts—and Molière, perhaps, ranked hypocrisy with the arts, by placing Tartuffe for ever among the actor-tribe—there is a pitch of perfection, above talent, which only genius can attain to. There is so faint a line between a work of genius and a work of talent that only a man of genius can appreciate the distance that divides Raphael from Correggio, Titian from Rubens. Nay, more: the vulgar are deceived; the stamp of genius is a certain appearance of facility. The work of genius, in fact, must, at first sight, look quite ordinary, so natural is it, above all things, even in the loftiest subjects. A great many peasant-women carry a baby as the famous Madonna of Dresden carries hers.—Well, and the crowning triumph of art, in a man of such ability as Théodose, is to have it said of him later: "He would have taken any one in!"

Now, in Thuillier's room, he scented the dawn of contradiction; he discerned in Colleville the clear and critical insight of an unsuccessful artist.

The young lawyer knew that Colleville did not like him; Colleville, as a result of various coincidences, useless to relate,

had really been led to believe in the augury of anagrams. None of his anagrams had failed. He had been well laughed at in the office, when on being asked what the letters of Auguste Jean François Minard might spell, he transposed them into *J'amassai une si grande fortune* (I amassed such a great fortune). Minard was very poor, but ten years later the anagram was justified.

Now that of Théodose was luckless. His wife's made him quake, and he had never told it to anybody, for Flavie Minard Colleville made *La vielle C., nom flétri, vole* (Old Madame C., a blighted name, steals).

On various occasions Théodose had made advances to the genial official of the Mairie, and had felt repelled by a coldness hardly natural in so communicative a man.

When the game of *bouillotte* was ended, Colleville drew Thuillier for a moment into a window-recess and said:

"You are giving that young lawyer his head too much; he quite took the lead in the conversation this evening."

"Thank you, my friend; forewarned is forearmed!" replied Thuillier, laughing in his sleeve at Colleville's caution.

Théodose, who happened to be talking to Madame Colleville, kept an eye on the two friends; and by the same instinct which women use to know when and to what effect they are being talked about, all across a drawing-room, he guessed that Colleville was trying to injure him in the opinion of that weak and simple Thuillier.

"Madame," said he in the pious lady's ear, "believe me, if there is anybody here capable of appreciating you, it is I. Any one on seeing you would say: here is a pearl fallen in the mire; you are not forty-two, for a woman's age is only what it seems, and many a woman of thirty, not to compare with you, would be glad indeed to have your figure and the beautiful face on which love has set his stamp without ever having filled your heart. You have dedicated yourself to God, I know, and I am too religious to wish to be anything more than your friend; but you have given yourself to Him because you have never found a man worthy of you. You have

indeed been loved, but I can see that you have never felt yourself worshiped. And here comes your husband, who has never been able to make a position for you suitable to your merits,—he hates me as though he could suspect that I love you, and just prevents my telling you now what I think I have hit upon to place you in the sphere for which nature intended you.—No, madame," he went on in a louder tone, "it is not the Abbé Gondrin who is the Lent preacher this year in our humble church of Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas; it is Monsieur d'Estival, a fellow-countryman of mine, who devotes himself to preaching for the benefit of the poorest class, and you will hear one of the most cogent preachers I know; a priest of an unattractive appearance, but such a soul!——"

"Then my desires will be fulfilled," said poor Madame Thuillier. "I never could understand our famous preachers."

A faint smile was seen on Mademoiselle Thuillier's lips and on those of other persons.

"They discourse too much of theological demonstrations; I have long been of that opinion," said Théodose. "But I never discuss religion, and but for Madame Colleville——"

"Are there demonstrations then in theology?" asked the mathematical professor guilelessly and point blank.

"I cannot suppose, monsieur," said Théodose, looking up at Félix Phellion, "that you ask the question seriously."

"Félix divides religion into two categories," said old Phellion, coming ponderously to his son's support, as he saw a pained expression on Madame Thuillier's pale face. "He regards it from the human and from the divine point of view —tradition and reason."

"What a heresy, monsieur!" said Théodose. "Religion is indivisible; it insists on faith above all else."

Old Phellion, pinioned by this speech, looked at his wife.

"It is time, my dear——" and he glanced at the clock.

"Oh, Monsieur Félix," said Céleste, in an undertone, to the frank mathematician, "cannot you, like Pascal and Bossuet, be at once learned and pious?"

The Phellions departing, the Collevilles followed; soon no one was left but Dutocq, Théodose, and the Thuilliers.

The flattery lavished on Flavie by Théodose was of the most commonplace type; but to understand this narrative it must be noted that the advocate kept himself in tune with these ordinary minds; he sailed their waters and spoke their language. Pierre Grassou was his painter, not Joseph Bridau; *Paul et Virginie* was his romance. The greatest living poet to him was Casimir Delavigne; in his eyes utility was the aim and end of art. Parmentin, the *inventor* of the potato, was, said he, better than thirty Raphaels; the man in the blue cloak was to him "A Sister of Charity." These phrases, which were Thuillier's, he would occasionally echo.

"That young Félix Phellion," said he now, "is just the college man of our day, the outcome of science which has pensioned off God. Bless me! What are we coming to? Nothing but religion can save France, for the fear of hell alone will preserve us from the domestic thieving that is perpetually going on in the heart of every household, eating into the soundest fortunes. You all have an internecine struggle in your very midst."

With this brilliant harangue he went away, after bidding the Thuilliers good-night, leaving Brigitte greatly impressed. Dutocq accompanied him.

"That is a young fellow of great talent!" said Thuillier sententiously.

"Yes, indeed, on my word!" replied Brigitte, as she put the lamps out.

"He is religious," said Madame Thuillier, leading the way.

"Môsieur," said Phellion to Colleville, as they reached the School of Mines, looking round to make sure that they were alone in the street, "I am in the habit of surrendering to the superior knowledge of others, but I cannot help seeing that this young lawyer lords it too grandly over our friends, the Thuilliers."

"It is my private opinion," replied Colleville, walking with Phellion behind his wife, Céleste, and Madame Phellion, who hung closely together, "he is a Jesuit, and I do not like those

people—the best of them are good for nothing. To me, Jesuit means trickery, and trickery with intent; they deceive for the pleasure of deceiving, and to keep their hand in, as the saying goes. That is my opinion, and I make no bones over saying so."

"I understand you, môsieur," replied Phellion, who had Colleville's arm.

"No, Monsieur Phellion," said Flavie, in a high little voice, "you do not understand Colleville; but I know what he means, and he had better say no more. Such matters are not for discussion in the street at eleven o'clock at night, and before a young girl."

"You are right, my dear," said Colleville.

At the corner of the Rue des Deux Eglises, which was the Phellions' road, they said good-night. Félix said to Colleville:

"Monsieur, your son François, if he were pushed, might get into the École Polytechnique. I undertake to qualify him for passing the examinations this year."

"That is too good an offer to refuse; thank you, my good friend," said Colleville. "It shall be seen to."

"Well done," said Phellion to his son.

"A very clever idea," said his mother.

"Why, what have you discovered in it?" asked Félix.

"Why, it is a very ingenious way of doing the polite to Céleste's parents."

"May I never solve another problem if I thought of it!" cried the young professor. "I found out by talking to the boys that François has a turn for mathematics, and I thought it right to inform his father——"

"Quite right, my son!" repeated Phellion. "I would not have you different. All my wishes are fulfilled, and I find my son honest, honorable, possessed of all the public and private virtues I could wish."

As soon as Céleste had gone to her room Madame Colleville said to her husband:

"Colleville, do not pronounce judgment on people so crudely without knowing them thoroughly. When you speak of Jesuits I know you are thinking of priests, and you will oblige me by keeping your opinions on religion to yourself when your daughter is present. We may sacrifice our own souls if we please, but not our children's. Do you want your daughter to be a creature devoid of religion? And besides, dear old boy, we are at the world's mercy; we have four children to provide for, and can you say that sooner or later you may not need the help of this one or that one? So do not make enemies; you have none; you are the best of good souls, and thanks to that, which in you is quite a charm, we have got on pretty well so far!"

"That will do!" said Colleville, who had flung his coat into a chair and was taking off his neck-cloth. "I was wrong; you are right, my beauty."

"At the first opportunity, my dear old fellow," said the cunning little woman, patting her husband's cheeks, "you try to do the civil to that little lawyer; he is a sharp customer; we must have him on our side. He can play a part? Well, play up to him. Pretend to be his dupe, and if he is clever, if he has a future before him, make him your friend. Do you suppose that I want you to stick as a mayor of a district?"

"Come here, *femme* Colleville," said the ex-clarinet player, patting his knee to show his wife the place where she was to perch, "let us toast out tootsems and talk. When I look at you I am each time more certain that the youth of a woman is in her figure——"

"And in her heart!——"

"In both," replied Colleville, "a light figure and a heavy heart——"

"No, silly—a deep heart."

"What is so nice in you is that you have kept your complexion without having to grow fat; but then you have small bones. I tell you, Flavie, if I had to begin life again I would not choose another wife."

"And you know I always liked you better than *the others*.

What a pity it is that monseigneur is dead! Do you know what I should like?"

"No."

"A post in the municipality at about twelve thousand francs, as a cashier, say either in Paris, or at Poissy—or as an agent."

"Either would meet my views."

"Well, then, supposing that monster of a lawyer could do anything; he can intrigue, you may depend on it. We will be civil to him; I will feel my way—just leave it to me; and above all do not spoil his game at the Thuilliers'."

Théodose had touched the aching spot in Flavie Colleville's heart, and this needs an explanation which may perhaps afford a synthetical survey of women's lives.

At the age of forty a woman, especially if she has tasted the poisoned apple of passion, is aware of a solemn dread; she perceives that two deaths await her—that of the body and that of the heart. If we divide women into the two great classes which answer to the commonest view of them: the virtuous and the guilty, it is safe to say that all alike, after that terrible date in life, are aware of an acute pain.

If virtuous and cheated of the craving of their nature, whether they have been brave enough for resignation, or have buried their rebelliousness in their souls or at the foot of the altar, they feel some horror as they say to themselves, "All is over!" The thought has such strange and infernal depths that we find in it the cause of some of the apostasies that now and then startle and appall the world.

If guilty, they find themselves at a dizzy height in one of those positions which sometimes, alas, find expression in madness or end in death or in some passion as tremendous as the situation.

This is the fallacy that lies at the bottom of the crisis: Either a woman has been happy, has made a virtue of happiness and can breathe no other than this atmosphere of incense, can move only in the blossom-laden air where flattery is

a perpetual caress—and so how can she give it up? Or else—which is even more strange than rare—in her pursuit of the happiness that eluded her she has found none but fatiguing pleasures, while sustained in the ardor of her pursuit by the incitements of satiated vanity, spurred to the chase like a gambler doubling his stakes, for, to her, the last days of her beauty are the last thing she risks on the cards of despair.

"You have been loved but never worshiped." This speech of la Peyrade's, emphasized by a look which read, not her heart, but her life, was the solution of an enigma, and Flavie felt herself explained.

The lawyer had repeated certain sentiments which books have made commonplace; but it matters not of what make or material the whip is that stings the sore of a thoroughbred horse. The poetry was in Flavie, not in the verse, just as the noise is not in the avalanche though it brings it down.

A young officer, two coxcombs, a banker, a clumsy lad, and poor Colleville were a melancholy set of experiences. Once in her life, indeed, Madame Colleville had dreamed of happiness, but she had not felt it, and death had hastily cut short the only passion in which Flavie had found any real charm. For two years now she had been obedient to the voice of religion, which had taught her that neither the Church nor the world speaks of happiness and love, but only of duty and submission; that in the eyes of those two great powers happiness dwells in the satisfaction obtained from painful or costly sacrifice for which there is no reward in this life. But she still heard a shriller voice; and as her religion was but a necessary mask she wore and not a conversion, as she could not take it off because she regarded it as a resource in the future, since devotion, true or feigned, was a way of living not unfitted to her future years, she clung to the Church, seated as it were on a bench in a forest-glade, reading the guide-posts to the ways, and awaiting what might happen as she felt night closing in.

Then her curiosity was greatly excited when she heard Théodose plainly state her secret position, without any as-

sumption of taking advantage of it, but attacking the inner side only of her nature by holding out a hope of the realization of an airy vision already seven or eight times destroyed.

Ever since the beginning of the winter she had understood that Théodose was surreptitiously watching her and studying her through and through. More than once she had put on her gray watered-silk gown, her black lace, and her little headdress of flowers twisted in with Mechlin, to make the best of herself; and a man always knows when a woman has dressed for him. The dreadful dandy of the Empire smothered her with vulgar flattery; she was the queen of the evening—but the Provençal said much more by a subtle glance.

Sunday after Sunday Flavie had expected him to make love to her; she said to herself: "He knows I am a pauper and he has not a penny! Or perhaps he is really pious!"

Théodose was determined to hurry nothing; like a skilful musician, he had marked the place in the symphony where he meant to hit the drum. As soon as he saw that Colleville was trying to raise suspicions in Thuillier, he had fired the broadside he had so carefully prepared during the months he had spent in studying Flavie, and with success, as in the morning he had succeeded with Thuillier.

As he went to bed he reflected:

"The wife is on my side; the husband cannot endure me. At this moment they are squabbling and I shall win the day, for she does what she likes with her husband."

But the Provençal was mistaken, so far as that there had not been the smallest disagreement, and that Colleville was sleeping by his dear little Flavie's side, while she was saying to herself:

"Théodose is a very superior man."

A great many men like la Peyrade derive superiority from the boldness or difficulty of an undertaking; the energy they must display gives solidity to their muscles; they throw all their strength into it, and then, whether they achieve success or meet with an overthrow, the world is surprised to see that they are small or mean, or worn out.

After having aroused a curiosity that was sure to become feverish, in the minds of the persons on whom Céleste's fate depended, Théodose affected to be extremely busy; for five or six days he was out from morning till night, so as not to see Flavie again till her desire had reached the point where she would overstep any limits of propriety, and so as to compel Thuillier to call on him.

He was almost certain to meet Madame Colleville at church on the following Sunday; in fact, they came out at the same moment, and met in the Rue des Deux Eglises. Théodose offered his arm to Flavie, who accepted it, sending her daughter on in front with Anatole. This youngest of her children, now twelve years old, was a day-boarder at Barniol's school, where he was being prepared in the elements; Phellion's son-in-law had naturally reduced the price for his day-board in anticipation of the hoped-for alliance between the Phellions and Céleste.

"Have you done me the honor and favor of thinking over what I said to you so blunderingly the other day?" asked the lawyer in an insinuating tone, as he pressed the fair one's arm to his heart with a gesture at once gentle and firm, for he affected to suppress his feelings and seem respectful against his impulse. "Do not misunderstand me," he went on, as he met such a glance from Madame Colleville's eyes as women, practised in the arts of passion, can find to express either severe reproof or a secret community of feelings. "I love you as a man loves a noble nature struggling against misfortune. Christian charity embraces the strong as well as the weak, and its treasures are for all. Refined, graceful, and elegant as you are, made to be the ornament of the highest sphere, what man can see you, without the deepest compassion, dragging out your life among these odious middle-class people who do not understand you—not even the aristocratic perfection of one of your attitudes, of one of your looks, or of one of your bewitching tones of voice.—Oh! if I were but rich, if it were only in my power, your husband, who is really a good soul, should be made a collector general, and you could

get him elected deputy.—But I, poor and ambitious, whose first duty is to crush my ambition since I am left at the bottom of the bag like the last number of a lottery, I can only offer you my arm instead of my heart. All my hopes are centered in a good marriage, and believe me, not only will I make my wife happy, but I will raise her to a high position in the State if she brings me the means of advancement.—It is a very fine day; come for a little walk in the Luxembourg," he added, as they reached the Rue d'Enfer and the corner of Madame Colleville's house, opposite to which was a passage into the gardens down the steps of a little structure, the last remnant of the famous Carthusian Convent.

The unresisting arm linked into his own gave Flavie's tacit consent, and as she deserved the honor of some show of violence, he dragged her away quickly, adding:

"Come along; we shall not always have such a good opportunity.—Oh!" he exclaimed, "your husband sees us; he is at the window; walk slowly——"

"You need have no fear of Monsieur Colleville," said Flavie, smiling. "He leaves me absolutely my own mistress."

"Oh! such, indeed, is the woman of my dreams!" exclaimed the Provençal with the ecstatic accent that only fires a southern soul and comes from southern lips.

"Forgive me, madame," he said, checking himself, and coming down from the upper regions to the exiled angel at whom he piously gazed. "Forgive me! To return to what I was saying—oh! how can I be insensible to the sufferings I myself experience when I see them no less the lot of a being to whom life ought to bring nothing but joy and happiness! —Your sorrows are mine; I am no more in my right place than you are in yours; the same ill fortune has made us brother and sister.

"Ah! dear Flavie!—The first time I was so happy as to see you was on the last Sunday in September, 1838. You were lovely! I shall often recall you in that little *mousseline de laine* frock, a tartan of some Scottish clan.—I said to myself that evening: 'Why is that woman at the Thuilliers'? above all, why had she ever any connection with this Thuillier?"

"Monsieur!" cried Flavie, terrified at the ominously swift flow that the Provençal had given to the conversation.

"Oh! I know all," he exclaimed, with a twitch of his shoulder, "and I understand everything—and I do not esteem you the less. There, there! These are not the sins of an ugly woman or a hunchback. You have to gather the fruit of your error, and I will help you: Celeste will be very rich, and that is where all your future prospects lie; you can have but one son-in-law; be clever enough to choose him well. An ambitious man may rise to office, but he will humiliate you, annoy you, and make your daughter miserable; if he loses her fortune he will certainly never remake it.—Yes, indeed, I love you," he added, "with unbounded devotion; you are superior to a thousand petty considerations that enmesh fools. Let us understand each other——"

Flavie was astounded; at the same time this excessive frankness appealed to her. "This man is plain-spoken enough!" said she to herself. Still, she acknowledged that she had never been so deeply moved and agitated as by this young man.

"Monsieur," said she, "I do not know who can have misled you so completely as to my past life or by what right——"

"Pray forgive me, madame," the Provençal put in with a coldness bordering on scorn. "I dreamt it all! I said to myself: 'She is all that!' but I was deceived by appearances. I know now why you will live on for ever in fourth-floor rooms in the Rue d'Enfer."

And he emphasized the retort with a vehement wave of his arm in the direction of the window where Colleville could be seen from the avenue in the gardens where they were walking alone, a vast field tilled and turned by so many young ambitions.

"I have been perfectly frank; I expected reciprocity. I have gone many a day without bread, madame; I managed to live, to study law, to qualify as a licentiate of law in Paris, on a capital of two thousand francs. I came in by the barrière d'Italie with five hundred francs in my pocket, vowing, like

a countryman of mine, that I would some day be one of the leading men of my country. And a man who has often picked his breakfast out of the baskets into which cook-shops throw their leavings, and which they empty in the street at six in the morning when the second-hand eating-houses can find nothing worth taking—such a man will shrink from no means that he may own to. Do you believe that I am the People's Friend?" said he, smiling. "Fame must have her trumpet; she cannot be heard if she speaks in a whisper; and without fame of what use is talent? The Advocate of the Poor will become the advocate of the rich. Now, have I not opened my inmost soul? Open your heart to me. Say, 'we will be friends,' and some day we will all be happy."

"Oh, dear! why did I come with you? Why did I take your arm?" exclaimed Flavie.

"Because it was your destiny!" replied he. "My dear and beloved Flavie," he went on, pressing her arm to his heart, "did you expect to hear me make commonplace speeches? We are sister and brother—that is the whole story."

And he turned back toward the steps to return to the Rue d'Enfer.

At the back of the satisfaction which a woman finds in violent excitement, Flavie was conscious of a great dread, and she mistook this terror for the sort of alarm that comes of a new passion; but she was spellbound, and walked on in utter silence.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Théodose, half-way along the passage.

"Of all you have been saying," she replied.

"But at our age," said he, "we skip the preliminaries; we are not children, and we both live in a sphere in which we ought to understand each other. In short," he added, as they turned into the Rue d'Enfer, "believe me, I am wholly yours." And he bowed solemnly.

"The irons are in the fire," said he to himself as he watched the retreat of his dazzled prey.

On going home Théodose found on his landing a man who figures in this tale as a submarine agent, or like a buried church on which the front of a palace is built up. The sight of this man, who, having rung in vain at la Peyrade's door, was now pulling Dutocq's bell, startled the Provençal; but the shock was internal; nothing on the surface betrayed this hidden agitation.

This was Cérizet, the man of whom Dutocq had spoken to Thuillier as his copying-clerk.

Cérizet, who was but eight and thirty, looked fifty, so wrecked was he by all that ages a man. His bald head showed a yellow skull, meagrely covered by a wig rusty with wear; his pale, flaccid features, curiously rough-hewn, were all the more unpleasant by reason of his nose being much disfigured; not indeed so badly as to make it necessary that he should wear a false nose; from the bridge at the forehead to the nostrils it was as nature made it, but disease had destroyed the nostrils towards the lip, leaving two holes of uncertain outline, thickening his pronunciation and hindering his speech. His eyes had been fine, but were weakened by every form of work and wear and sitting late at night; they were rimmed with red, and evidently damaged; his look when animated by an expression of mischief might have frightened judges and criminals—even those who are frightened at nothing. His mouth, bereft of teeth, or retaining only a few blackened wrecks, was sinister, and moistened with a foam of white saliva which did not, however, wet his thin, colorless lips.

Cérizet, a small man, not so much lean as shrunken, tried to correct the disasters to his person by dress, and though the costume was not magnificent, he kept it in a state of scrupulous cleanliness that perhaps enhanced its wretchedness. Everything about him was doubtful, like his age, his nose, and his expression. It was impossible to guess whether he were eight-and-thirty or sixty, whether his blue trousers, faded but neatly strapped, would be in the fashion ere long, or dated from the year 1835. A pair of boots, gone limp,

but carefully blacked, and resoled for the third time, had once been good, and had perhaps trodden the carpets of official residences. His overcoat with braided frogs, drenched in many a shower, and oval buttons that indiscreetly betrayed the moulds, showed by its cut that it had once been elegant. His satin stock and tie hid the lack of linen with some success, but at the back the teeth of the buckle had frayed the stuff, which was shining with the oleaginous friction of his wig. In the days of its youth his waistcoat had been smart, but it was one of those waistcoats which are sold for four francs out of the depths of a ready-made-clothes shop. Every article was carefully brushed, including the bruised and shining silk hat. Everything was in harmony and matched the black gloves of this subaltern Mephistopheles, of whom the history may be told in a few words.

He was an artist in wickedness, with whom at first wickedness had succeeded, and who, deluded by his early triumphs, persisted in plotting infamy always well within the letter of the law. By treachery to his master he had become owner of a printing business; then he had been fined as the publisher of a liberal newspaper, and in the country, after the Restoration, he became one of the pet victims of the royalist Ministry, and was called the "unfortunate" Cérizet, like the unfortunate Chauvet, or the heroic Mercier. In 1830 this reputation for patriotism earned him a place as *sous-préfet,* which he lost six months later; but he declared that he had been condemned unheard, and made so much noise about it, that during Casimir Perier's administration he was made the editor of an anti-republican paper in the pay of the Government. After that he went into business, and among the concerns he was mixed up with was one of the most disastrous joint-stock companies that ever gave rise to criminal proceedings; he took the severe sentence he incurred quite unabashed, asserting that it was a piece of revenge got up by the republican party, who could not forgive him for the severe handling it had met with from his newspaper, and was paying him back

tenfold. He spent his term of imprisonment in a lunatic asylum.

The authorities were at last ashamed of a man who had risen from the foundling hospital, and whose almost crapulous habits and disgraceful swindling, in combination with a retired banker named Claparon, had brought him down to well-deserved reprobation. Thus Cérizet, fallen inch by inch to the lowest step of the social ladder, only obtained the place of copying clerk in Dutocq's office by appealing to a remnant of pity.

In the lowest pit of misery this man dreamed of retaliation; and as he had nothing left to lose, he was ready for any means of achieving it. Dutocq and he were bound together by their equal depravity. Cérizet was to Dutocq, in that neighborhood, what a dog is to the sportsman. Cérizet, experienced in all the needs of poverty, lent small sums on short loans at enormous interest; he began as Dutocq's partner, and this ancient gutter-boy, now become the costermongers' banker, the truck merchants' bill-discounter, was the gnawing worm of the district.

"I say," said Cérizet, when Dutocq opened his door, "Théodose is come in; let us go to his rooms."

The advocate of the poor let the two men in before him. They all three crossed a small room, with a tiled end waxed floor, the red, encaustic tiles reflecting the daylight that came in between cotton curtains, showing a plain, round, walnut-wood table, and a walnut-wood sideboard on which a lamp stood. Through it they went into a small sitting-room with red curtains and mahogany furniture, covered with red Utrecht velvet; the wall opposite the windows was furnished with a bookcase filled with law books. Vulgar ornaments graced the chimney-shelf,—a clock with four mahogany columns, and candlesticks under shades. The study where the three friends seated themselves in front of a coal fire was the study of a budding pleader, the furniture consisting of a writing-table, an armchair, short, green silk blinds to the windows, a green carpet, a set of pigeon holes for boxes, and a

sofa, over which hung an ivory crucifix, mounted on velvet. The bedroom, kitchen, and other rooms looked out on the courtyard.

"Well," said Cérizet, "is it all right? Are things moving?"

"Yes," replied Théodose.

"Confess, now, that I had a bright idea," cried Dutocq, "when I thought of a way of getting round that gaby Thuillier."

"Yes, but I am not behindhand," exclaimed Cérizet, "I have come this morning to show you the way to fit the thumbscrews on to the old maid and make her spin like a teetotum. Make no mistake; Mademoiselle Thuillier is everything in this affair; if you win her over, you take the citadel. Say little, but to the purpose, as befits those who know what they are about. My old partner, Claparon, is, as you know, an idiot, and he will be all his life what he has been, a stalking horse. At this moment his name is put forward by a Paris notary, mixed up with some builders, who are all going to the dogs together,—notary, masons, and all! Claparon is the scapegoat; he has never been bankrupt, and everything must have a beginning; at this moment he is stowed away in my den in the Rue des Poules, where no one will ever find him. Now Claparon is furious; he has not a sou; and among the five or six houses which have to be sold, there is one, a perfect gem, all of squared stone, close to the Madeleine,—a frontage all patterned over like a melon, and with lovely sculpture,—and not being finished, it will be sold for a hundred thousand francs at most; by spending twenty-five thousand francs on it, it will be worth ten thousand francs a year in a couple of years' time. Now, by helping Mademoiselle Thuillier to secure this property, you can win her heart, for you can give her to understand that such bargains may be met with every year. Vain people can be managed either by working on their conceit or by threats; money-grabbers by attacking or by filling their purse. And as, after all, working for the Thuilliers is working for ourselves, we must enable her to benefit by this stroke of business."

"But the notary?" said Dutocq, "why does he let it slip through his fingers?"

"The notary, my dear boy! It is he who is the making of us. Being obliged to sell his business, and ruined, in fact, he has kept this portion of the crumbs of the cake. Believing in that idiot Claparon's honesty, he has instructed him to find a nominal purchaser, for he looks for equal confidence and prudence. We will leave him to suppose that Mademoiselle Thuillier is an honest woman, allowing poor Claparon to make use of her name; and the notary and Claparon will both be caught. I owe my friend Claparon this little turn, for he let me in for the brunt of the battle in his joint-stock concern, which was bowled over by Couture—in whose skin you would be sorry to find yourselves!" he added, with a flash of devilish hatred in his dulled eyes. "Gentlemen, I have spoken!" he said, in a big voice which trumpeted through his nose, as he assumed a theatrical attitude, for once, in an hour of abject poverty, he had tried the stage.

As he ended his harangue there was a ring at the bell, and la Peyrade went to open the door.

"Do you still feel sure of him?" said Cérizet to Dutocq. "I fancy there is something about him—in short, I have had experience of betrayals."

"He is so completely in our power," said Dutocq, "that I did not take the trouble to watch him. Still, between ourselves, I had not thought him so spry all round as he certainly is. We thought we were mounting a man who could not ride a thoroughbred, and the rascal is a jockey!"

"He had better mind what he is about," said Cérizet mysteriously. "I can blow him over like a house of cards. As to you, Daddy Dutocq, you can see him at work and keep an eye on him; watch him closely. And I can feel his pulse, too, by getting Claparon to propose to him to get rid of us; then we shall know where we are."

"That is not a bad idea," said Dutocq. "You can see as far as most people."

"We are tarred with the same brush, that's all," replied Cérizet.

These remarks were spoken in an undertone while Théodose went to the door and returned. When the lawyer came back, Cérizet was examining everything in the study.

"It is Thuillier," said Théodose, "I expected him to call. He is in the drawing-room. He must not see Cérizet's great-coat," he added smiling; "those trimmings would alarm him."

"Pooh! you are the friend of the poor; it is all part of the performance. Do you want some money?" asked Cérizet, taking a hundred francs out of his trousers' pocket. "There, that looks well," and he placed the pile of silver on the chimney-shelf.

"And we can get away through the bedroom," said Dutocq.

"Very well, good-bye then," said the Provençal, opening a papered door leading from the study to the bedroom. "Come in here, my dear Monsieur Thuillier," he called out to the erstwhile "buck."

Then as soon as he saw him come to the study door, he went to let out his two confederates through the bedroom, dressing-room, and kitchen, which opened on to the landing.

"In six months you must be Céleste's husband and looking up in the world. You are a lucky dog; you have not found yourself in the dock of a police court twice, as I have: the first time in 1825, for constructive treason, as they called it, —a series of newspaper articles that I never wrote; and the second time for appropriating the profits of a joint-stock company that never came to anything. Come, get the pot boiling, by the piper! for Dutocq and I want our twenty-five thousand francs apiece deuced badly; and be brave, my good fellow!" he added, holding out his hand to Théodose to test him by his grip of it.

The Provençal gave Cérizet his right hand and wrung his with much warmth.

"My dear boy, you may be very sure that whatever position I may attain I shall not forget the plight from which

you rescued me to set me on horseback here. I am your bait; but you are giving me the lion's share, and I should be worse than a convict turned spy if I did not play a square game."

As soon as the door was shut Cérizet peeped through the keyhole to see la Peyrade's face; but the lawyer had turned his back, going to join Thuillier, and his suspicious ally could not see what expression his features assumed.

It was neither disgust nor dismay, but joy, which the released features expressed. Théodose saw his means of succeeding multiplying, and he flattered himself he could get rid of his sordid comrades, though indeed he owed everything to them. Poverty has unfathomable depths, especially in Paris, miry bogs, from which, when a drowned man comes to the surface again, he brings foul matter clinging to his body or his clothes. Cérizet, once the wealthy friend and patron of Théodose, was now the filthy stain that still stuck to the Provençal, and the promoter of the joint-stock company could guess that he was only too anxious to brush him off, now that he moved in a sphere where decent attire was indispensable.

"My dear Théodose," said Thuillier, "we have been hoping to see you every day of the week, and each evening has brought us disappointment. As next Sunday is our dinner-party day, my sister and my wife desired me to beg you to come——"

"I have been so very busy," said Théodose, "that I have not had two minutes to give to anybody, not even to you, whom I count as one of my friends, and to whom I particularly wanted to speak——'

"Then you have really thought seriously of what you told me?" cried Thuillier, interrupting Théodose.

"If you had not come to clinch the matter, I should esteem you less than I do," replied la Peyrade, smiling. "You have been a second-class clerk; you must therefore have some remnants of ambition, and in you it is legitimate, or the deuce is in it! Why, really, between you and me, when we see a man like Minard,—a gilded crock, going to make his bow to the

King and swagger about the Tuileries; or Popinot, again, on the highway to office,—and you, a man inured to the routine of administration, a man with thirty years' experience, left to prick out seedlings! What can I say? I will be frank with you, my dear Thuillier. I want to get you on because you will pull me after you.

"Well, and this is my plan. We shall have to elect a member of the Municipal Council for this district, and you must be the man . . . and you *shall* be the man," he added, emphasizing the word. "Some day, at the next general election, you will be representative of the district in the lower Chamber—and the time is not far off. The votes which will elect you to the Municipal Council will not fail you when it is a question of getting into Parliament; you may depend upon me for that."

"But what means have you?" asked Thuillier, dazzled.

"You shall know. But leave this long and delicate business to me to manage; if you make any foolish talk as to what is said or planned or agreed upon between us, I leave you to yourself and wish you a very good morning."

"Oh, you may trust an old second clerk to hold his tongue; I have known secrets——"

"Very well! But you must keep these secrets from your wife, your sister, Monsieur and Madame Colleville."

"Not a muscle of my face shall move," said Thuillier, setting his features.

"Very good," said la Peyrade. "I will test you. To be eligible you must pay the full amount of taxes, and that you do not do."

"I beg your pardon, I pay enough to sit on the Municipal Council; two francs and eighty-six centimes."

"Yes, but to sit in the Chamber five hundred francs is the qualification, and you have no time to lose, for you must prove possession for a year."

"The Devil!" said Thuillier, "how am I to rise to a rating of five hundred francs within the next twelvemonth?"

"You may be paying it by the end of July. My devotion

to you leads me to confide to you the secret of a stroke of business which will enable you to make thirty or forty thousand francs a year on a capital of a hundred and fifty thousand at most. But in your household, you see, your sister has long been at the head of all business arrangements, and I have no fault to find with that. She has the soundest judgment possible; it will be necessary, therefore, to begin with, that I should have the opportunity of winning Mademoiselle Brigitte's regard and friendship by proposing this investment to her—and for this reason: If Mademoiselle Thuillier did not believe in me, we should get into trouble; but how can you suggest to your sister that she should buy the property in your name? It would be far better that the idea should come from me. However, you shall both be enabled to judge of the opportunity.

"As to the means at my command for promoting your election to the Municipal Council of the Seine, they are these: Phellion can command one-fourth of the votes in the district he and Laudigeois have lived in for thirty years; they are regarded as oracles. I have a friend who can dispose of another fourth, and the Curé of Saint-Jacques, who is not without influence, may secure a few votes. Dutocq, who is as well known to the residents as the justice of the peace, will do his best for me, especially if I am not working for myself; and then Colleville, as secretary to the Mayor, represents one-fourth of the votes."

"To be sure!" cried Thuillier. "I am as good as elected."

"Do you think so?" said la Peyrade, in a tone of alarming irony. "Well then, only go to your friend Colleville, and ask him to help you; you will see what he says. Success in an election is never secured by the candidate, but by his friends. You must never ask for anything for yourself; you must wait to be urged to accept it, and seem to have no ambition."

"La Peyrade!" cried Thuillier, rising and taking the young lawyer's hand, "you are a monstrous clever fellow."

"No match for you, but fairly wide-awake," replied the Provençal, smiling.

"And if we succeed, how am I to repay you?" asked Thuillier guilelessly.

"Ah, that is the point! You will think me audacious; but you must remember that there is in me a feeling which must plead my excuses, for it has given me courage to try every resource. I am in love, and to you I confide my secret."

"But with whom?" said Thuillier.

"With your sweet little Céleste," replied la Peyrade, "and my love is surety for my devotion to you; what would I not do for a father-in-law? It is but selfishness; it is working for my own ends."

"Hush!" cried Thuillier.

"Why, my friend, if Flavie were not on my side," said la Peyrade, putting his hands on Thuillier's hips, "and if I did not know all, should I speak of it to you? Only on this point say nothing to her; wait till she speaks.

"Listen to me; I am of the stuff that ministers are made of, and I do not want to wear Céleste without having won her; you shall not plight her to me till the day when your name is drawn out of the ballot-box often enough to make you a deputy of Paris. To be a member for Paris you must get the whip-hand of Minard. Minard must be wiped out, and you must keep your influence in hand; so to achieve this result, let them still hope to win Céleste—we will trick them all.

"Madame Colleville, you, and I will cut a figure some day. Do not, however, think me grasping; I want Céleste without any fortune, with nothing but her prospects. To live as a member of your family and leave my wife among you all is what I dream of. You see, I have no underhand schemes. You, within six months of taking your seat on the Town Council, will have the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and will be made Officer of the Order as soon as you are elected. As to your speeches in the Chamber—why, we will write them between us. Perhaps you would do well to write some solid book on half-moral, half-political questions; for instance, on Charitable Institutions, considered from a lofty stand-

point, such as the reform of the Monts-de-Piété, where the abuses are a scandal. Let us do something to make your name known; it would work well, especially in the immediate district. I tell you, you may get the Cross and become member of the Municipal Council for the Department of the Seine. Well, put your trust in me; do not think of making me one of your family till you have the ribbon in your button-hole and take your seat in the Chamber of Deputies.

"Still, I will do better than that. I will get you forty thousand francs a year."

"For only one of these things you should have our Céleste!"

"What a jewel!" said la Peyrade, raising his eyes to heaven. "I am foolish enough to pray for her every day. She is enchanting—and very like you. Well, well! you need not impress secrecy on me; and it was from Dutocq that I heard it all. Till this evening! I am off to Phellion's to see what I can do for you. By the way, you understand that you never for a moment thought of me as a husband for Céleste—you would cut me in pieces sooner. On that matter not a word, not even to Flavie. Wait till she mentions it to you. Phellion will rush at you this evening to secure your adherence to his plans and nominate you as candidate."

"This evening?" said Thuillier.

"This evening," replied Théodose, "unless I should not find him at home."

Thuillier went away, saying to himself:

"That is a remarkably clever fellow! We shall get on together. And on my word, it would be hard to do better for Céleste. They would live with us, a family party, and that is a great thing; he is a good fellow, a genial soul."

To men of Thuillier's character, this, a secondary matter really, carries all the weight of a sound reason. Théodose had been delightfully genial.

The house to which la Peyrade presently directed his steps had, for twenty years, been to Phellion his *hoc erat in votis;* but it was as essentially the house of Phellion as the braiding

of Cérizet's great-coat was the indispensable ornament of that garment.

This dwelling, only one room deep,—some twenty feet or so,—was built up against a much larger house, and had a sort of little wing with one window, projecting at each end. Its principal merit lay in a garden about thirty fathoms wide, and longer than the frontage by the width of a forecourt towards the street and an arbor of lime trees. Beyond the further wing, the courtyard was shut off from the street by iron railings with a double gate in the middle.

This edifice, built of rough stone stuccoed over, was two stories high, lime-washed yellow, with Venetian shutters above and boarded shutters below, all painted green. The kitchen was on the ground floor at the end by the courtyard, and the cook, a stout, strong wench, also did duty as gatekeeper, under the guardianship of two enormous dogs.

The façade, consisting of five windows, besides the two wings which projected about six feet, was in the *Style Phellion*. Above the door the owner had inserted a marble panel, on which was inscribed in gilt letters: *Aurea Mediocritas*. Above a sun-dial in another panel he had placed this wise maxim: *Umbra mea vita, sic!*

The window-sills had been lately restored with blocks of red Languedoc marble that he had found in a stone-mason's yard. At the further end of the garden was a painted stone figure looking to the passers-by like a nurse suckling a baby. Phellion was his own gardener.

The ground floor consisted of the dining-room and drawing-room, divided by the staircase and a little hall or anteroom. Beyond the drawing-room was a small room for Phellion's little study.

On the first floor were the bedrooms for the master and mistress and for the young professor; above these, the children's and servants' rooms; for Phellion, out of respect for his own age and his wife's, had allowed himself to set up a man-servant of about fifteen—especially now that his son was a qualified instructor. To the left on entering the forecourt

was a small out-building where the firewood was stored, and where in the last owner's time a porter had lodged. The Phellions were no doubt waiting till the professor should be married to allow themselves this crowning luxury.

This little freehold, long coveted by the Phellions, had cost eighteen thousand francs in 1831. The house was separated from the forecourt by a balustrade on a low wall of hewn stone, formed of hollow tiles laid above each other alternately, and finished at the top with flat stones. This parapet, breast-high, had within it a hedge of China roses, and in the middle was a gate of wooden palings opposite the gates to the street.

Any one who knows the Impasse des Feuillantines will understand that Phellion's house, standing at a right angle to the street, faced south, being sheltered on the north by the high party-wall against which it was built.

The domes of the Pantheon and of the Val-de-Grâce stand close by, like two giants, and so effectually block the sky that as you walk in the garden you feel quite shut in. Nor can any spot be more silent than the Impasse des Feuillantines. Such was the retreat chosen by this great but unrecognized citizen, who was now tasting the pleasures of repose, after paying his debt to his country by working in the office of the Exchequer, from which he had retired as first-class clerk after thirty-six years of service.

In 1832 he had led his battalion of the National Guard to the front at Saint-Merri, but those who were near him saw his eyes were full of tears at the thought of being obliged to fire on his misguided fellow-countrymen. The fight was over by the time the legion had marched at the double across the bridge of Notre-Dame, coming out at the Quai aux Fleurs. His virtuous hesitancy won him the affection of all the neighborhood, but it lost him the decoration of the Legion of Honor. The Colonel expressed his opinion loudly that a man under arms must never deliberate: the speech made by Louis-Philippe to the National Guard at Metz. But in spite of this, Phellion's civic virtues and the immense respect he

enjoyed in the whole neighborhood had kept him in his rank as Major of the National Guard for eight years. He was now nearly sixty, and as he saw the hour approaching when he would be compelled to lay down the sword and unbuckle the military stock he could only hope that the King would vouchsafe to reward his services by granting him the Legion of Honor.

Truth compels me to say—though such paltriness casts a slur on so noble a character—that Major Phellion stood on tiptoe at the levées at the Tuileries; that he put himself in the foreground and made sheeps' eyes at the Citizen-King when he dined at his table; in short, intrigued as best he might, but had never yet met the eye of the king of his choice. The worthy man had already thought of asking Minard to support his secret ambition, but had not yet brought himself to the point.

Phellion, the advocate of passive obedience, was a stoic in all that concerned his duties, iron as to every matter of conscience. To complete the portrait by a sketch of his appearance: at fifty, Phellion was *stout,* to use the accepted word; his face, uniform in color and marked with the small-pox, was a perfect full moon, so that his lips, which had once been thick, were now nothing remarkable. His eyes were weak and protected by blue spectacles; the innocence of their light blue was no longer visible to invite a smile; but his white hair had at last given gravity to a face which, twelve years since, had verged on idiocy and given cause for ridicule. Time, which so cruelly disfigures faces with fine and delicate features, improves those which in youth have been thick and clumsy, and this was the case with Phellion. He occupied the leisure of old age in compiling an abridged history of France; for Phellion was the author of several books sanctioned by the University.

When la Peyrade came in, the whole of the family was assembled; Madame Barniol had called to report to her parents on the health of one of her children who was ailing; the student from the School of Mines was spending the day at home.

All in their Sunday best, and seated in front of the fire in the drawing-room,—a paneled room painted in two shades of gray,—on second-hand easy-chairs, they all started on hearing Geneviève, the cook, announce the very man whom they were discussing apropos to Céleste, Félix Phellion's adoration carrying him so far as to make him go to Mass in order to see her. The mathematician had made this effort that very morning, and was being good-naturedly bantered by the family, who at the same time only hoped that Céleste and her parents might appreciate the treasure at their feet.

"Alas! The Thuilliers seem to me very much set on an exceedingly dangerous man," said Madame Phellion. "He made Madame Colleville take his arm this morning, and they went off together to the Luxembourg."

"There is something peculiarly sinister in that lawyer," exclaimed Félix. "If I were told he had committed some crime, I should not be surprised."

"That is going too far," said his father. "He is first cousin to Tartuffe, the immortal figure cast in bronze by our honest poet, Molière, for Molière's genius, my children, was founded on honesty and patriotism."

As he pronounced this verdict, Geneviève came in, saying:

"Monsieur de la Peyrade is here, waiting to speak to master."

"To me?" cried Monsieur Phellion. "Show him in," said he, with the solemnity in small things that made him rather ridiculous, though it always impressed his family, who regarded him as their king.

Phellion, his two sons, his wife, and his daughter, all rose to return the lawyer's inclusive bow.

"To what do we owe the honor of this visit, monsieur?" said Phellion, with severity.

"To your importance in this part of the town, my dear Monsieur Phellion, and to public business," replied Théodose.

"Then we will go into my study," said Phellion.

"No, no, my dear," said Madame Phellion, a lean little person, as flat as a flounder, and whose face still wore the

set severity of a teacher of music in schools for young ladies; "we will leave you here."

An upright Erard piano between the windows and opposite the fireplace proclaimed her pretentions still to be considered a virtuoso.

"Oh, am I so unlucky as to put you to flight?" said Théodose, with a genial smile at the mother and daughter. "You have here a delightful retreat," he went on, "and you need only a pretty daughter-in-law to enable you to spend your days in the *Aurea Mediocritas* that was the Latin poet's dream, and in the midst of family joys. Your past labors well deserve such a recompense, for, from what I have heard of you, my dear Monsieur Phellion, you are a good citizen and a patriarch."

"Môsieur," said Phellion bashfully. "I have done my duty, and that is all!"

On hearing the word "daughter-in-law" spoken by Théodose, Madame Barniol, who was as like her mother as two drops of water are alike, looked at Madame Phellion and Félix as much as to say: "Can we be mistaken?"

A need for talking this matter over led these four to go out into the garden, for in March 1840 the weather was almost fine, at any rate in Paris.

"Major," said Théodose, when he was alone with the worthy citizen, who was always flattered by being thus addressed, "I have come to speak to you of election matters."

"To be sure, we have to appoint a member of the Municipal Council," said Phellion, interrupting him.

"And it is to discuss a candidate that I have ventured to intrude on your Sunday enjoyments, though even so we may not go beyond family interests."

Phellion himself could not be more completely Phellion than Théodose was at this moment.

"I will not allow you to say another word," replied the Major, cutting in on a pause made by Théodose to note the effect of his speech. "My choice is fixed."

"Then we have hit on the same idea!" cried Théodose.

"Well-meaning men are as likely to jump together as great wits."

"I do not think that has happened this time," said Phellion. "This district has hitherto been represented on the Town Council by the very best of men, who was also the most admirable of lawyers—the late Monsieur Popinot, who died Councillor of State. When he was to be replaced, his nephew, who inherits his beneficence, was not at the time a resident in this quarter, but since then he has purchased and moved into the house that was his uncle's in the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève; he is physician to the École Polytechnique and to one of our hospitals. He is an ornament to the district; and for these reasons, and to honor the uncle's memory in the person of his nephew, I and some other residents have resolved to work for the election of Dr. Horace Bianchon, member of the Academy of Sciences, as you know, and one of the rising glories of the great Paris School of Medicine. We do not think a man great solely because he is famous; the late Councillor Popinot was, in my opinion, almost the equal of Saint Vincent de Paul."

"A physician is not an administrator," replied Théodose. "Besides, I have come to claim your vote for a man for whose sake your nearest interests demand the sacrifice of a selection which, after all, has nothing to do with the public welfare."

"Oh, môsieur!" cried Phellion, rising and striking an attitude like Lafon in *Le Glorieux,* "have you such a contempt for me as to suppose that personal interest could ever influence my political conscience? When the commonwealth is in question, I am neither more nor less than a citizen."

La Peyrade smiled as he thought of the conflict about to take place between the "citizen" and the father.

"Do not pledge yourself too sternly to your convictions, I beg," said he, "for your beloved Félix's happiness is in the balance."

"What do you mean to convey by those words?" asked Phellion, pausing in the middle of the drawing-room, his right hand slipped within his waistcoat over his heart—a favorite position with the famous Odilon Barrot.

"I have come on behalf of our common friend, our worthy and admirable friend, Monsieur Thuillier, whose influence over the destinies of charming Céleste Colleville is well known to you. And if, as I believe, your son,—a young man whose indisputable merit might make any family proud,—if he is courting Céleste with a view to a marriage in every respect suitable, you cannot do better, to secure the eternal gratitude of the Thuilliers, than commend our worthy friend to the suffrages of your fellow-citizens. I, for my part, though but lately settled in the neighborhood, might take it on myself to do this, for some little benefits done to the poorer class have secured me a certain amount of influence; but services to the poor do not count for much in the estimation of those who are more highly taxed; besides, the obscurity of my life is not in harmony with any such demonstration. I have devoted myself, monsieur, to the service of the humblest, like the late Judge Popinot, a truly sublime man, as you say; and if my vocation were not, as it is, in a certain sense religious, and so far antagonistic to the demands of married life, my taste, my ultimate destiny, would be the service of God and the Church.

"I make no fuss, like the sham philanthropists; I do not write—I work, for I have simply devoted my life to the exercise of Christian charity. I fancy I have guessed what is the ambition of our friend Thuillier, and I wished to promote the happiness of two beings made for each other by suggesting to you the means of finding your way to his heart—a somewhat cold one."

Phellion was quite overpowered by this harangue, which was very cleverly spoken; he was dazzled, startled, but he was the same Phellion still; he advanced to the lawyer and held out his hand. La Peyrade took it. They shook hands with effusion—such a grasp as was often exchanged in August 1830 between a citizen and a man on his promotion.

"Monsieur," said the Major, with feeling, "I had misjudged you. What you have done me the honor to confide to me will die here," and he laid his hand on his heart. "You

are one of those men—and they are few—who console us for many woes inherent in our social scheme. Real worth is so rarely met with that our weak judgment distrusts appearances. In me you have a friend, if you will allow me to do myself the honor of assuming the title.

"But you must learn to know me, monsieur; I should sacrifice my self-respect by proposing Thuillier. No, my son must never owe his happiness to an evil deed of his father's. I will not transfer my vote to another candidate because it is to my son's interest. That, monsieur, is true virtue!"

La Peyrade took out his handkerchief, rubbed it into his eye, and extracted a tear. Then, holding out his hand to Phellion, while he turned his face aside:

"That, monsieur, is the sublime aspect of political life in the conflict with private feeling!" said he. "If I had come only to witness this spectacle, my visit would not be time wasted. What can I say? In your place I would do the same. You are the noblest work of God—an honest man! A citizen on Rousseau's model! With more citizens of this stamp, O France, my native land! what might you not become! It is I, monsieur, who crave to be allowed to call myself your friend."

"What can be going on?" cried Madame Phellion, watching the scene from outside through the window. "Your father and that monster of a man are in each other's arms." Phellion and the lawyer now went out to join the family in the garden.

"My dear Félix," said the father, pointing to la Peyrade, who bowed low to Madame Phellion, "be grateful to this worthy gentleman; he will be helpful rather than mischievous to your interests."

The lawyer walked for five minutes under the leafless lime-trees with Madame Phellion and Madame Barniol, giving them some advice, which, in the serious dilemma to which Phellion's obstinacy had given rise, was to bear fruit that evening, while its first happy result was to make both the ladies admirers of his talents, candor, and inestimable high qualities.

The whole family in a body accompanied the young advocate to the gate on the street, and every eye watched him till he had turned the corner of the Rue Saint-Jacques.

Madame Phellion took her husband's arm as they went indoors, and said:

"What possesses you, my dear, you, such a good father, to risk the very best match our Félix could make out of an extravagant sense of delicacy?"

"My dear little woman," replied Phellion, "the great men of antiquity, such as Brutus and others, were not fathers when they were bound to be citizens first. The middle class, even far more than the aristocracy, whose place it is called upon to take, is expected to exercise the highest virtues. Monsieur de Saint-Hilaire thought nothing of the loss of his arm when he saw Turenne dead.

"We, too, have to show our quality; we must do so in every grade of the social hierarchy. Shall I inculcate these principles in my family only to betray them at the moment for proving them? No. Weep, my dear, to-day, if you will; you will esteem me to-morrow!" he added, as he saw tears in the eyes of his skinny little wife.

These grandiloquent words were spoken on the threshold of the door over which was inscribed *Aurea Mediocritas.*

"I ought to have added: *et digna,*" said Phellion, pointing to the tablet, "but that the words would imply praise."

"But, father," said Marie-Théodore Phellion, the engineer student, when they were all in the drawing-room again, "it does not seem to me that a man fails in honor when he changes his opinion in the matter of a choice which is in itself unimportant to the public good."

"Unimportant, my dear son!" cried Phellion. "Between ourselves—and Félix is of my opinion—Monsieur Thuillier is a man devoid of capacity of any kind. He knows nothing! Monsieur Horace Bianchon is a man of great ability; he will get many things done for our district, and Thuillier never a thing! But, above all, my son, remember that to give up a good resolution for a bad one out of interested motives is an

infamous action, which may escape the criticism of men, but which God will punish. I am, or I believe I am, clear of blame before my own conscience, and I owe it to you all to leave you an unblemished memory. Nothing can alter my decision."

"Oh, my dear good father!" cried little Madame Barniol, throwing herself on her knees on a stool by her father's side. "Do not mount your high horse. There are plenty of fools and idiots in the Municipal Council, and France goes on all the same. Worthy old Thuillier will vote with the majority. Remember, Céleste will have five hundred thousand francs, perhaps."

"She may have millions," said Phellion, "and I would let them lie. I will not propose Thuillier when it is my duty to the memory of the best man that ever lived to nominate Horace Bianchon. From his seat in heaven Popinot looks down on me and approves!" cried Phellion, with enthusiasm. "It is by such base considerations as these that France is degraded and the citizen class brought into contempt."

"My father is right," said Félix, rousing himself from a brown study, "and he deserves our respect and affection, as he always has done in the course of his unpretentious, busy, and honored life. I could not bear to owe my happiness to any remorse in his noble soul, nor to any intrigue. I love Céleste as much as I love my family, but above all else I place my father's honor; and the moment the affair is a question of conscience to him, let no more be said."

Phellion, his eyes full of tears, went up to his eldest son, and clasping him in his arms he exclaimed in a broken voice:

"My son, my son!"

"All this is stuff and nonsense," said Madame Phellion to her daughter in an undertone. "Come and dress me; we must put an end to this. I know your father; he is pig-headed. To carry out the plan suggested to us by that good and pious young man I shall need your support, Théodore. Be ready, my son."

Just then Geneviève came in and handed a note to Monsieur Phellion senior.

"An invitation to dinner at the Thuilliers' for my wife, myself, and Félix," said he.

The magnificent and startling scheme evolved by the advocate of the poor had upset the Thuilliers as much as the Phellions; and Jérôme, without telling his sister anything, for he already felt on his honor to his Mephistopheles, went to her room in a great bustle to say:

"Good little woman," he always appealed to her feelings in these words,—"we shall have some bigwigs to dinner this evening. I am going to ask the Minards; so give us a good dinner. I am writing to invite Monsieur and Madame Phellion; it is a little late, but we are on no ceremony with them. As to the Minards, I must invent some civil excuse; I happen to want them."

"Four Minards, three Phellions, four Collevilles, and ourselves—thirteen."

"La Peyrade fourteen, and it will be as well to invite Dutocq; he may be of service to us. I will go up to his rooms."

"What are you brewing?" cried his sister; "fifteen to dinner, a matter of forty francs at least, sent flying!"

"Do not regret the money, my good little woman; and above all be as sweet as you can to our young friend la Peyrade. He is something like a friend! And he will prove it. If you love me, cherish him as the apple of your eye."

And he left Brigitte bewildered.

"Yes, and I will wait till he proves it!" said she to herself. "I am not to be caught by fine words; not I! He is a pleasant youth enough, but I must have studied him a little closer before wearing him next my heart."

After inviting Dutocq, Thuillier, who had beautified himself, went off to the Rue des Maçons-Sorbonne, to the Minards' house, where he had to bamboozle Zélie and disguise the fact that the invitation was an impromptu.

Minard had bought one of the vast and sumptuous dwellings which the religious orders built in the vicinity of the Sorbonne; and, as he mounted a broad stone staircase, with

a balustrade that showed how well the artistic crafts had flourished in the days of Louis XIII., Thuillier coveted the Mayor's residence and position.

This handsome house, with a garden behind and courtyard in front of it, was striking from the stamp, at once elegant and dignified, of that king's reign, the happy medium between the bad taste of the decaying renaissance and the splendor of the early days of Louis XVIII. This transition may be seen in many public buildings; massive scrolls, as on the façade of the Sorbonne, and columns in strictly Greek proportions, are characteristic of this style of architecture.

A retired grocer, a successful cheat, here occupied the place of the ecclesiastical director of an institution formerly known as the *Economat*, a foundation in connection with the general administration of the French clerical body, and due to Richelieu's foresight and acumen.

Thuillier's name opened the doors of a drawing-room where, amid red velvet and gilding and the most gorgeous products of the East, a hapless woman sat enthroned, who, by sheer weight, crushed the spirits of the princes and princesses at every "popular" ball given at the Tuileries.

"Is she not a perfect caricature?" said a pseudo-lady of the bedchamber one evening to a duchess, who could not help laughing as she saw Zélie, bedizened with diamonds, as red as a poppy, squeezed into a spangled dress, and rolling like one of the barrels out of her own forgotten shop.

"Can you forgive me, lady fair," said Thuillier, with a wriggle ending in the second attitude of his 1807 series, "for having left this invitation on my desk, believing that I had sent it? It is for to-day—perhaps I am too late."

Zélie consulted her husband's face as he came forward to shake hands with Thuillier, and said:

"We were going to look at a country house and dine haphazard at an eating-house, but we can give it up; for my part, all the more readily because I think it deuced common to go out of town of a Sunday."

"We will get up a little hop for the young folks, if there are enough of us; and I quite expect it, for I have left a note for

Phellion, whose wife is on intimate terms with Madame Prou, the successor——"

"The succestress," Madame Minard put in.

"Nay," replied Thuillier, "it would be the successoress—as we say the Mayoress—of Mademoiselle Lagrave. She was a Barniol."

"Must I dress?" asked Madame Minard.

"I should think not, indeed!" cried Thuillier. "My sister would give me a fine scolding. No, it is a family affair. Under the Empire, madame, we made acquaintance by dancing together. In those glorious days a good dancer was as much valued as a good soldier. Nowadays people are too unromantic."

"We will not talk politics," said the Mayor, smiling. "The King is a great man and very clever. I live in constant admiration of our own times and the institutions we have made for ourselves. The King knows what he is about in developing our industries; he is struggling hand to hand with England, and this fruitful peace is giving him more to do than all the wars of the Empire."

"What a member Minard would make!" exclaimed Zélie artlessly. "He tries speaking when we are alone,—and you would help to get him returned, would not you, Thuillier?"

"We are not to talk politics," replied Thuillier. "We shall see you then, at five?"

"Is that little Vinet to be there?" asked Minard. "He is looking out for Céleste, no doubt."

"Then he may wear the willow," replied Thuillier; "Brigitte will not hear of him."

Zélie and Minard exchanged a glance of satisfaction.

"To think that we have to bemean ourselves with those people for our boy's sake!" cried Zélie, when Thuillier was going down the stairs to which the Mayor had seen him.

"Aha, so you want to be Deputy, do you?" said Thuillier, as he departed. "Nothing will satisfy these grocers. Dear me, dear me! What would Napoleon say to seeing power in such hands! I, at any rate, know something of office. What a rival! What will la Peyrade say to that?"

The ambitious ex-clerk went to invite the whole of the Laudigeois family to join them in the evening, and then called on the Collevilles to make sure of Céleste's being nicely dressed.

He found Flavie somewhat pensive; she hesitated about accepting, and Thuillier had to persuade her.

"My old and ever-young friend," said he, putting his arm round her waist, for they were alone in her room, "I can have no secrets from you. A matter very important to me is in the wind. I must say no more, but I may ask you to be particularly fascinating to a certain young man——"

"Which?"

"Young la Peyrade."

"But, Charles, why?"

"He holds my future prospects in his hands; besides, he is a man of genius. Oh, I know one when I see him. He has *that*——" and Thuillier gave his hand a twist like a dentist drawing a back tooth. "We must secure him, Flavie! But above all do not let us show our hand or allow him to detect the secret of his strength. Between him and me it is to be give and take."

"Well, then," Flavie asked, "am I to flirt with him?"

"Not too much, my angel," said Thuillier, fatuously.

And he went off quite unobservant of the sort of amazement that had come over Flavie.

"This young man is a power!" said she to herself. "Well, we shall see."

And so she had her hair dressed with marabout feathers; she put on her pretty gray and pink gown, showed her fine shoulders through a black mantilla, and took care that Céleste should appear in a simple silk frock with a high tucker and pleated collar, and with her hair dressed in plaited loops.

At half-past four Théodose was at his post. He had assumed his most vacuous and almost servile manner, and his softest tones; he first went into the garden with Thuillier.

"My friend," said he, "I have not a doubt of your success,

but I feel that I must once more impress on you the need for absolute secrecy. If you should be questioned on any point, especially about Céleste, give such evasive replies as leave the inquirer in doubt—you must have learned the trick of old in the office."

"All right," replied Thuillier. "But are you really sure?"

"You will see the dessert I have ready for you. But above all, be diffident. Here come the Minards—leave me to hocus them. Bring them here and vanish."

After the preliminary greetings la Peyrade took care to keep at the Mayor's elbow, and at an opportune moment he took him aside and said:—

"Monsieur le Maire, a man in your position does not come to kick his heels in this house without some end in view. I do not wish to inquire into your motives; I have not the smallest right to do so, and it is no business of mine here below to meddle with the concerns of the powers of this world; still, forgive my being so bold, and condescend to listen to a piece of advice I can give you. If I do you a service to-day you are in a position to do me two to-morrow, so if you should find that I have been of any use to you, I am really acting on the promptings of self-interest—Our friend Thuillier is in despair at being a nobody, and is bent on being of some importance, a personage in the district——"

"Aha!" said Minard.

"Oh, nothing great! He wants to be elected a member of the Municipal Council. I happen to know that Phellion, foreseeing the ulterior advantage of doing him a good turn, intends to propose our poor friend as a candidate. Well, you might find it necessary to your own schemes to be beforehand with him. It can only be beneficial, I should say agreeable, to you to see Thuillier elected; he will fill his place well at the Town Council; there are worse men than he on the Board. And besides, as indebted to you for such advancement, he will see through your eyes; he regards you as one of the shining lights of the Municipality——"

"My dear sir, I am much obliged to you," said Minard.

"You are doing me a service which I can never sufficiently repay, and which proves——"

"That I have no liking for those Phellions," replied la Peyrade, taking advantage of the Mayor's hesitancy, fearing lest he should say something that the lawyer might construe as disdain. "I hate men who trade on their own honesty and coin money out of fine sentiments."

"You know the sort well," said Minard; "typical sycophants. That man's whole life for the last ten years is accounted for by this scrap of red ribbon," added he, showing his own button-hole.

"Be careful," said Théodose, "his son is in love with Céleste, and holds the citadel."

"Aye, but my son has twelve thousand francs a year of his own——"

"Ah!" said the lawyer, with an emphatic shrug, "Mademoiselle Brigitte said the other day that she wanted at least as much as that for Céleste. And after all, within six months' time, you will see that Thuillier will own a freehold worth forty thousand francs a year."

"The deuce he will!" replied the Mayor. "I suspected as much Well, he shall be member of the Town Council."

"Come what may, do not mention me," said the advocate of the poor, hurrying forward to meet Madame Phellion—"Well, fair lady, and have you been successful?"

"I waited till four o'clock, but that worthy and admirable man would not allow me to speak to the end. He is too busy to accept such a charge, and Monsieur Phellion has the letter in which Monsieur Bianchon thanks him for his good intentions, and says that so far as he is concerned, he means to vote for Monsieur Thuillier. He is using all his influence in Thuillier's behalf, and begs my husband to do the same."

"And what does your excellent husband say?"

"'I have done my duty,' he replied, 'I have been true to my conscious, and now I am wholly for Thuillier.'"

"Well, then, everything is settled," said la Peyrade. "Forget my visit; the whole credit of the idea is yours."

He then turned to Madame Colleville, assuming an expression of deep respect.

"Madame," said he, "be so kind as to bring our good Papa Colleville this way; we have a little surprise for Thuillier, and he must be let into the secret."

While la Peyrade was playing a part for Colleville's benefit, and indulging in very sparkling pleasantries while explaining the position and persuading him that he ought to support Thuillier's nomination, if only out of family feeling, Flavie, in the drawing-room, was listening to the following remarks, which quite mystified her; her ears tingled.

"I should like to know what Monsieur Colleville and Monsieur de la Peyrade are saying that makes them laugh so much," observed Madame Thuillier vapidly, as she looked through the window.

"They are talking such nonsense as men do when they get together," replied Mademoiselle Thuillier, who often abused men out of a sort of instinct natural in old maids.

"He is incapable of such a thing," said Phellion gravely. "Monsieur de la Peyrade is one of the most virtuous young men I have ever met. Every one knows how highly I think of Félix; well, I put them on the same line; nay, I could even wish that my son had a little of the graceful piety that characterizes Monsieur Théodose!"

"He is, indeed, a man of high merit, and sure to get on," said Minard. "For my part, he has quite won my good opinion—I will not say my protection——"

"He spends more on lamp-oil than on bread," said Dutocq; "that I know."

"His mother must be proud of him, if he is so happy as still to have a mother," said Madame Phellion sententiously.

"To us he is a perfect treasure," added Thuillier, "and so modest, too; he never puts himself forward."

"I can answer for one thing," said Dutocq, "and that is that no young fellow ever maintained a more dignified attitude in poverty—and he has lived through it; but he has suffered, that is very plain."

"Poor young man!" cried Zélie; "oh, such things make my heart ache!"

"You may trust him with your secrets and your fortune," said Thuillier, "and that, in these days, is the utmost that can be said of any man."

"It is Colleville who is making him laugh," cried Dutocq.

Colleville and la Peyrade were just coming down the garden, the best of friends.

"Gentlemen," said Brigitte, "soup and the King must not be kept waiting; hand in the ladies."

Five minutes after this pleasant jest, an inheritance from the porter's lodge, Brigitte had the satisfaction of seeing round her table the principal personages of this drama, who were all, in fact, presently to appear in her drawing-room, with the exception of the dreadful Cérizet.

The portrait of the retired cash-bag maker would perhaps be inadequate without a detailed account of one of her best dinners. The characteristics of the middle-class cook of 1840 form one of the items necessary to a history of manners, and clever housekeepers may find a lesson in the description. A woman does not make empty bags for twenty years without considering the means of filling one or two. Now there was this peculiarity in Brigitte: she combined the thrift which lays the foundation of wealth with an intelligent sense for needful outlay. Her comparative extravagance, when her brother or Céleste was concerned, was the very antipodes of avarice. Indeed, she often pitied herself for not being miserly. At the last dinner she had given she had told the guests how, after holding out for ten minutes and going through perfect misery, she had ended by giving ten francs to a workwoman in the neighborhood who had not, she knew, had any food for two days.

"Nature," said she, artlessly, "was stronger than reason."

The soup was *bouillon*, stock of the palest hue; for even on an occasion such as this the cook was enjoined to make plenty of it, and besides, as the beef was to supply the family board on the next day and the next, the less it yielded of its juices to the stock, the more substantial it would be.

The boiled beef, not overdone, was always removed at these words, pronounced by Brigitte, while Thuillier cut the meat:

"I am afraid it is a little hard; never mind, Thuillier, no one will eat any of it; we have other things to fall back on."

The dish was, in fact, flanked by four others standing on hot-plates of copper, with the plating worn off.

At this dinner, which came to be called the *candidate's* dinner, the first course consisted of a pair of ducks *aux olives,* and opposite, a pasty of veal quenelles, with an eel *à la tartare,* and a *fricandeau* on endive to correspond.

The principal dish of the second course was a magnificent roast goose, stuffed with chestnuts; a dish of corn salad, ornamented with discs of scarlet beet-root, a dish of custards in glasses, and a timbale of macaroni.

This dinner—worthy to be a porter's wedding banquet—cost twenty francs at most; the remains would feed the family for two days, and Brigitte would say:

"*Dame!* When you have company the money flies! It is frightful!"

The table was lighted by two hideous plated candle-sticks with four branches, in which twinkled the inexpensive composition candles known as *Aurore.* The linen was dazzlingly white, and the old thread-pattern plate was part of the paternal inheritance—purchase made by old Thuillier at the time of the Revolution for use in the sort of unlicensed eating-house he had kept in his lodge, an institution suppressed in all the offices in 1816.

Thus the fare was in keeping with the dining-room, with the house, and with the Thuilliers, who were fated not to rise superior to this standard. The Minards, the Collevilles, and la Peyrade exchanged a smile or two, betraying a common thought, satirical, but suppressed. They alone knew of any superior class of luxury, and the Minards plainly showed that they must have some ulterior motive in accepting such a dinner. La Peyrade, who sat next to Flavie, said in her ear:

"You must confess that they want some one to give them a lesson in living, and that you and Colleville are eating

what is called *Cag-mag*—a familiar dish with me! But those Minards! What horrible greed of money! Your daughter would be lost to you forever; such *parvenus* have all the vices of the aristocrats of a past time without any of their elegance. Their son, who has twelve thousand francs a year of his own, may surely find a wife in the Potasse set without their drawing their speculative rake over this field. What fun it is to play upon such folks, as if they were a bass or a clarinet!"

Flavie listened with a smile, and did not withdraw her foot when Théodose lightly pressed it with his boot.

"To understand what is going on," said he "let us communicate by the pedal. You must know me thoroughly since this morning; I am not the man to play any trumpery tricks——"

Flavie had not been spoilt in the matter of superiority; the man's decisive and easy tone dazzled the woman to whom he, with skilful sleight of hand, had presented such an option as placed her between *yes* and *no*. She must take him or leave him, and as his conduct was the outcome of deep calculation, he watched with a softened glance, but keenly sagacious observation, the effects of his fascinations.

As the dishes of the second course were being removed, Minard, fearing lest Phellion should be the first in the field, said, very solemnly, to Thuillier:

"My dear Thuillier, when I accepted your invitation it was because I have an important communication to make to you, which does you so much honor that I feel that all your guests must be my witnesses."

Thuillier turned pale.

"You have procured me the Cross of the Legion of Honor?" he exclaimed, eager to prove that he was not lacking in intuition, as Théodose gave him a look.

"You will have that, too, some day," replied the Mayor. But this is something better. The Cross is a favor dependent on the good-will of a Minister, whereas at this moment what I have to propose to you depends on election by the common consent of your fellow-citizens. In short, a con-

siderable number of the electors of this district have cast their eyes on you to honor you with their confidence as representing the district on the Municipal Council of Paris, that is to say, as we all know, the head council of the Seine——"

"Bravo!" said Dutocq.

Phellion rose.

"Monsieur, the Mayor has anticipated me," said he, with emotion "But it is so flattering to our friend to find himself the object of such eager respect on the part of so many good citizens, and to receive votes from all parts of the capital at once, that I cannot lament the fact of coming only second in the field—and besides, I yield to the authorities," and he bowed respectfully to Minard. "Yes, Môsieur Thuillier, several electors were thinking of electing you in that part of the district where I have set up my humble Penates, and there is this especially in your favor: you were suggested to them by a very distinguished man (*sensation*), by a man through whom we had proposed to do honor to one of the most admirable residents in this municipal district, who, for twenty years, was the father of its people. I mean the late Monsieur Popinot, in his lifetime Councillor of State, and our representative on the Town Council of Paris. But his nephew, Dr. Bianchon, one of our most distinguished residents, has declined the responsibilities of such a post, in view of his absorbing avocations; but, while thanking us for the compliment, he himself—note the point—recommended the Mayor's selection to our suffrages as being, from his experience in the post he formerly filled, peculiarly capable of exercising the functions of an ædile!"

And Phellion sat down amid a murmur of acclamation.

"Thuillier, you may rely on me as an old friend," said Colleville.

The guests were all touched by the spectacle presented by old Brigitte and Madame Thuillier. Brigitte, as pale as if she were about to faint, let the slow tears trickle down her cheeks—tears of unutterable joy; and Madame Thuillier sat with a fixed gaze as if thunderstruck. Suddenly Brigitte

sprang up and flew into the kitchen, crying out to Joséphine:

"Come to the cellar, girl; I must have out some of the wine from behind the faggots."

"My friends," said Thuillier with emotion, "this is the proudest day of my life—happier than that of my election, if I consent indeed to allow myself to be nominated for the suffrages of my fellow-citizens" (cries of *"Yes, yes!"*), "for I feel that thirty years of service have told upon me, and, as you will understand, a man of honor must consider his strength and capabilities before assuming the functions of an ædile—"

"I expected no less from you, Monsieur Thuillier!" cried Phellion. "Oh! I beg your pardon; I never in my life before interrupted any one—and a man who was my superior, too! But there are circumstances——"

"Accept, accept!" cried Zélie. "The deuce is in it! But we want just such men as you to govern us!"

"Resign yourself to your fate, my good sir," said Dutocq, "and long live the Councillor elect! But we have nothing to drink——"

"So that is settled," said Minard. "You are our nominee?"

"You take my merits very largely for granted," replied Thuillier

"What next!" said Colleville. "Why, a man who has served in the galleys of the Exchequer office for thirty years is invaluable on the Town Council!"

"You are far too modest," said young Minard. "Your capabilities are well known to us; they are remembered in the office as a precedent."

"Well, on your own heads be it!" said Thuillier.

"The King will be delighted at the selection, that I can promise you," said Minard, drawing himself up.

"Gentlemen," said la Peyrade, "will you allow a junior resident of the Faubourg Saint-Jacques to make one remark which is not unimportant?"

The conviction they all shared of the young advocate's merits secured complete silence.

"The influence exerted by Monsieur Minard as Mayor of the adjoining district, immense as it is in ours also, where his memory is held dear; that of Monsieur Phellion, the oracle—yes, it is the truth"—said he at an apologetic gesture from Phellion—"the oracle of his battalion; that, no less important, which Monsieur Colleville owes to the urbanity and frankness of his manners; that of Monsieur Dutocq, clerk to the justice of the peace, which will be not less valuable; and the humble efforts I may make in my narrow sphere of labors are a guarantee of success. But success is not all! To insure a speedy triumph, we must all pledge ourselves to the most absolute secrecy as to what has just taken place here. Otherwise, without intending or knowing it, we should excite envy and meaner passions which would presently give rise to obstacles to be surmounted. The political feeling of our new social organization, nay, its very basis,—its symbol and the condition of its existence,—lies in a certain division of power with the middle class, that being the true force of modern social life, the focus of the moral sense, of wholesome feeling, of intelligent industry; and we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that the principle of election, now applied to almost every State function, has carried ambitious aspiration and the mania for becoming 'Somebody'—excuse the homely word—down to social depths which they ought never to have stirred.

"Some persons see good in this; some only evil; it would ill become me to decide the question in the presence of those to whose superior judgment I bow. It is enough to state it, to show the danger to which our friend's flag may be exposed. It is hardly a week since the decease of our representative on the Municipal Council, and the district is already effervescent with petty ambitions. Every one pushes to the front at whatever cost. The writ for election may not be issued for another month, and between this and then what intrigues we shall see! Do not, I entreat you, let us expose our friend Thuillier to the lash of his competitors. Do not abandon him to public discussion, the modern Harpy, which is but the mouthpiece of calumny and envy, the pretext snatched at by

inimical feeling to decry all that is great, to befoul all that is respectable, to dishonor all that is sacred. No, let us do as the third party does in the Chamber; let us say nothing, but vote!" . . .

"He speaks well," said Phellion to his neighbor, Dutocq.

"And sound sense, too!"

Minard junior was yellow and green with envy.

"Very true, and very well put!" exclaimed the elder Minard.

"Unanimously carried," said Colleville. "Gentlemen, we are all men of honor; it is enough that we are agreed on this point."

"Those who mean to win must note which way the wind blows," said Phellion sententiously.

At this juncture Mademoiselle Thuillier reappeared on the scene, followed by the two maids. The cellar key was tucked through her belt, and three bottles of champagne, three bottles of old Hermitage, and a bottle of Malaga were placed on the table. But she herself carried a little humpbacked bottle, like an ancient fairy Carabosse, which, with almost reverent care, she placed on the table before her. In the midst of the hilarity caused by this lavish expenditure of choice wines, the result of her gratitude, and a damning reflection on her usual stinted hospitality, a number of dessert dishes were brought in; piles of figs, raisins, prunes, and almonds, pyramids of oranges, preserves, and candied fruits, brought out of the depths of her store closet, which would never have figured on the table but for this great occasion.

"Céleste," said she, to her sister-in-law, "they will bring you a bottle of brandy, bought by my father in 1802; make an orange salad! Monsieur Phellion, open the champagne; that bottle is for you three. Monsieur Dutocq, take another. Monsieur Colleville, you, who are so clever at making a cork fly!——"

The maids set champagne glasses, claret glasses, and small glasses, and Joséphine brought in three more bottles of Bordeaux.

"Of the comet-year!" exclaimed Thuillier. "Gentlemen, you have turned my sister's brain."

"Punch and cakes this evening," said she. "I have sent out to buy some tea at the druggist's. Dear me! If I had known that there was an election in the wind," she added, turning to her sister-in-law, "I would have had a turkey."

The speech was greeted with hearty laughter.

"Oh! but we have had a goose," said Minard the younger, laughing.

"It never rains but it pours!" said Madame Thuillier, as she saw meringues and *marrons glacés* handed round.

Mademoiselle Thuillier's face was on fire; she was a sublime sight: a sister's affection never found a more frenzied expression.

"To us who know her, it is really pathetic!" exclaimed Madame Colleville.

The glasses were filled, the guests looked at each other, they seemed to await a toast. La Peyrade spoke:

"Gentlemen, let us drink to a sublime creature!" Every one sat amazed. "To Mademoiselle Brigitte!"

They rose, they clinked glasses, they cried "Health to Mademoiselle Thuillier!" so certainly can the expression of genuine feeling strike an enthusiastic response.

"Gentlemen," said Phellion, consulting a penciled slip of paper, "To Industry and its splendid reward, in the person of our old friend, now one of the Mayors of Paris—to Monsieur Minard and his lady!"

Then, after five minutes of general conversation, Thuillier rose, and said:

"Gentlemen—The King and the Royal Family; I say no more; their names are all-sufficient."

"To my brother's election!" said Mademoiselle Thuillier.

"Now I will make you laugh," la Peyrade whispered to Flavie, and he rose. "To the ladies! To the bewitching sex to whom we owe so much happiness, irrespective of our mothers, sisters, and wives."

This toast provoked much merriment, and Colleville, already cheerful, remarked:

"You wretch, you have taken the words out of my mouth."

The Mayor rose; perfect silence reigned.

"Gentlemen, To our Institutions! In them lie the strength and greatness of dynastic France!"

The bottles were emptied amid a chorus of admiration of the astonishing excellence and fine quality of the wine.

Presently, Céleste Colleville said shyly:

"Mamma, will you allow me to propose a toast?"

The poor child had observed her godmother's puzzled face—the mistress of the house, utterly overlooked, wearing the expression almost of a dog not knowing which master to follow, looking from her terrible sister-in-law to her husband, studying their countenances, forgetting herself. Still the gladness mingling with the crushed expression of the poor woman, who was accustomed to count for nothing, to suppress every idea and every emotion, had the effect of winter sunshine through the mist, grudgingly shining through the flabby, faded features. The gauze cap, with its dark-hued flowers, the ill-dressed hair, the drab-gray gown, with no ornament whatever but a thick gold chain; everything, even her attitude, appealed to the younger Céleste's feelings, for she alone in all the world knew the true worth of this woman shut up in silence, who saw all that was going forward, and, enduring all things, found comfort only in her godchild and in God.

"Let the dear child propose her little toast," said la Peyrade to Flavie.

"Speak away, my child," cried Colleville; "we still have the Hermitage to finish, and it is A 1, I can tell you."

"To my kind god-mamma!" said the child, holding out her glass, with a pretty bow, to Madame Thuillier.

The poor woman, quite scared, looked through a gush of tears alternately at her husband and her sister; but her position in the family was so well known, and this homage from youth and beauty to weakness was so touching, that every one felt its pathos; the men all rose and bowed to Madame Thuillier.

"Oh! Céleste, I wish I had a kingdom to lay at your feet!" said Félix Phellion.

His good old father wiped away a tear, and Dutocq, even, was touched.

"She is a dear child!" said Mademoiselle Thuillier, getting up and going round to embrace her sister-in-law.

"Now, it is my turn!" said Colleville, assuming a heroic attitude. "Listen to me: To Friendship! Empty your glasses. Fill them again. Now: To the Fine Arts! the flower of social life! Empty your glasses! Fill them up again! To our meeting at just such another dinner the day after the election!"

"What is that little bottle?" Dutocq asked Mademoiselle Thuillier.

"That," said she, "is one of my three bottles of liqueur from Madame Amphoux; the second is for Céleste's wedding; the third for the christening of her first child."

"My sister's brain is almost turned," said Thuillier to Colleville.

The dinner was brought to an end by a toast from Thuillier at a hint from Théodose, at the moment when the Malaga shone in the small glasses like so many rubies.

"Colleville, gentlemen," said he, "drank to Friendship. I, in this noble liquor, drink to my Friends."

A cordial cheer responded to this sentimental speech; but, as Dutocq said to Théodose, "It was murder to give such Malaga to be poured down such vulgar throats."

"If we could but imitate this, my dear," cried Madame Minard, making her glass ring by her way of sucking down the Spanish wine, "what a fortune we might make!"

Zélie was at the climax of incandescence; she was really alarming.

"Why," replied Minard, "ours is made already."

"Do you think with me," said Brigitte to Madame Thuillier, "that we had better take coffee in the drawing-room?"

Madame Thuillier, in obedience, or as feigning to be the mistress of the house, rose at once.

"You are a great magician," said Flavie to la Peyrade, as she took his arm to return from the dining-room to the drawing-room.

"I do not aim at witchcraft over any one but you," he replied. "And on my word, it is only fair revenge; you are more bewitching than ever to-day."

"Thuillier!" she exclaimed, to avoid a contest, "Thuillier! fancying himself a political figure!"

"But, dear heart, in this world half of the ridiculous figures we see are the product of some such plotting. Men themselves are less guilty in this way than they are commonly supposed to be. In how many houses do you find the husband, the children, the intimates of the family, all agreeing to persuade an exceedingly silly mother that she is witty, or a woman of fifty that she is young and lovely? This leads to infinite annoyance for the indifferent bystanders. One man's revolting foppishness is due to the idolatry of a mistress; another owes his belief that he can write verse to flatterers who are paid to make him fancy himself a poet. Every household has its great man, and the result—as in the Chamber—is general darkness, in spite of all those shining lights of France. Men of real talent only laugh among themselves; that is all.

"You are the wit and beauty of this little vulgar world; that is what brought me to your feet. But my second thought was to drag you out of it, for I love you truly—and as a friend rather than a lover, though a good deal of love has stolen in," he added, pressing her to his heart under shelter of the window recess into which he had led her.

"Madame Phellion will preside at the piano," said Colleville. "Everybody must dance this evening: the bottles, Brigitte's franc-pieces, and all the little girls! I will run home and fetch my clarinet." And he handed his empty coffee-cup to his wife, smiling to see that she and Théodose were such good friends.

"What have you done to my husband?" asked Flavie of the seducer.

"Am I to tell you all our secrets?"

"Oh! then you don't love me," said she with the coquettish slyness of a woman on the verge of yielding.

"Well, since you tell me all yours," said he, giving the rein to the spirit of the hour under cover of Provençal gaiety,—always charming and apparently so natural,—"I cannot conceal from you one pang of my heart."

He led her back to the window, and went on with a smile: "Colleville, poor man, saw in me an artist crushed by all these commonplace people, silent in their presence because I was misunderstood, undervalued, and outcast; but he felt the heat of the fire that is consuming me. Yes," he added, in a tone of intense conviction, "for I am an artist in speech after the pattern of Berryer; I could make a jury weep while I wept myself, for I am as nervous as a woman. Then your husband, who has a horror of all these people, made game of them with me; at first we laughed, but then growing serious he found me fully his match. I confided to him our plan for making something of Thuillier, and I showed him all he would gain by working a political puppet. 'If it were only,' said I, 'to be called *de* Colleville, and to place your charming wife in the position in which I should like to see her,—in some good revenue office,—and then you could get yourself elected to the Chamber; for in order to achieve all you ought to become, you would only have to spend a few years in one of the departments—high Alps or lower Alps—in some hole of a town where every one would adore you, and your wife would fascinate every living soul. And such a place,' added I, 'will be easy to get, especially if you marry your sweet Céleste to a man who has any influence in Parliament.' Now common sense disguised as a jest can make a far deeper impression on some natures than it does unaided, so Colleville and I are the best friends in the world. Did not he say at table, 'Wretch, you took the words out of my mouth!'? By the end of the evening, we shall say *tu* and *toi*. And then, a little party such as always tempts artists who have been broken in to domestic rule to kick over the traces, and to which I will

make him come with me, will crown the matter. We shall be as good friends as he and Thuillier are—or better—for I have told him that Thuillier will be bursting with envy when he sees him with a rosette.

"This, my adored one, is what a serious attachment gives a man courage enough to do. Colleville will be bound to accept me, since I can only go to your house by his permission. But you could make me lick a leper, swallow live toads, seduce Brigitte; yes, I would impale my heart on that marlingspike, if I wanted her for a crutch to drag myself to your feet!"

"This morning, you frightened me——" she began.

"And this evening you are no longer afraid. Aye," added he, "no harm can ever come to you through me!"

"You are, I must own, a most extraordinary man!"

"Not at all; my smallest, as well as my greatest, efforts are reflections from the flame you have lighted; and I mean to be your son-in-law, that we may never have to part. My wife, good heavens! She will be no more than a child-bearing machine. The supreme being, the divinity, will be you," he whispered in her ear.

"You are Satan!" she said with a sort of terror.

"Nay; but I am something of a poet, like all the natives of my province. Come! Be my Joséphine. I will call on you to-morrow at two o'clock; I have a burning desire to see where you sleep, the furniture you use, the color of the hangings, how things are arranged about you—to admire the pearl in its shell."

And with these words he left her, without waiting for an answer.

Flavie, who never in her life had heard love expressed in the impassioned language of romance, remained bewildered, but happy, her heart throbbing, as she confessed to herself that it was hard indeed to resist such an influence.

Théodose had come for the first time in new trousers, gray silk socks and pumps, a black silk waistcoat and black satin cravat; a pin in good taste sparkled on the knot. He had a new coat on of fashionable cut, and lemon kid gloves, set

off by his white shirt-cuffs; in fact, he was the only man with any style of manners or appearance in the room which was gradually filling with guests.

Madame Pron, *née* Barniol, had brought with her two schoolgirls of seventeen, entrusted to her motherly care by parents living in the islands of Bourbon and Martinique. Monsieur Pron, a professor of rhetoric in a school managed by priests, belonged to the Phellion type; but instead of expanding on the surface in phrases and demonstrations, and constantly posing as a model, he was curt and sententious. Monsieur and Madame Pron, the cream of the Phellion circle, were at home on Mondays; they were very intimate with the Barniols and the Phellions. Little Monsieur Pron was a dancer, though a professor.

The high reputation of the school kept by the Demoiselles Lagrave, in which Monsieur and Madame Phellion had for twenty years been teachers, had risen even higher under the management of Mademoiselle Barniol—the most able and the earliest of their assistant mistresses. Monsieur Pron had considerable influence in that part of the district which lay between the Boulevard du Mont Parnasse, Luxembourg, and the Rue de Sèvres. So, soon as his friend appeared, Phellion, without needing any instructions, took him by the arm and led him into a corner, where he initiated him into the great Thuillier conspiracy; ten minutes later they both came to speak to Thuillier, and the window-bay, corresponding to that in which Flavie still stood lost in thought, was, no doubt, the scene of a trio worthy to be compared, in its way, with that of the three Swiss conspirators in *William Tell*.

"Do you see the immaculate and honest Phellion turned intriguer?" said Théodose to Flavie. "Give an honest man sufficient cause and he will wade through the dirtiest bargain; for, you see, he has hooked on Pron, and Pron has fallen into step solely in behalf of Félix Phellion, who at this minute is arm in arm with your little Céleste. Go and separate them; they have been together these ten minutes, and young Minard is prowling round them like an irritated bull-dog."

Félix, still impressed by the deep emotion he had felt at Céleste's generous impulse and heartfelt speech, when every one else had forgotten it, excepting Madame Thuillier, acted on one of those ingenuously subtle impulses which form the honest wiles of true love; but they were new to him; mathematics occupied his mind. He went to stand near Madame Thuillier, imagining that she would call Céleste to her side. This crafty speculation, apart from any depth of passion, was successful; more especially because Minard the younger, regarding Céleste merely as a fortune, had not the same happy inspiration, but sipped his coffee while talking politics to Laudigeois, Barniol, and Dutocq, by order of his father, who was looking forward to the elections of 1842.

"Who could help loving Céleste!" said Félix to Madame Thuillier.

"Poor dear child; no one in the world loves me but she," replied the unhappy woman, restraining her tears.

"Nay, madame; there are two of us to love you," replied this guileless Mathieu Laensberg with a smile.

"What are you talking about?" Céleste inquired, coming up to her godmother.

"My child," said the pious victim, drawing the girl to her, and kissing her forehead, "he says you are two of you to love me."

"Do not scorn the bold assumption, mademoiselle," said the future candidate for the Academy of Sciences; "but allow me to do all in my power to realize it. It is in my nature; injustice rouses me to revolt. Ah, the Saviour of mankind was right indeed when He promised future bliss to the meek in spirit, to the sacrificed lambs. A man who had but loved you before, Céleste, would adore you after your sublime impulse at dessert. But innocence alone can console the martyr. You are a sweet, good girl, and you will be one of those women who are the pride and joy of a family. Happy the man who shall win you."

"My dear godmother, through what spectacles does Monsieur Félix see me, I wonder?"

"He appreciates you at your true value, my angel, and I will pray Heaven for you."

"If you could but know," said Félix, "how happy I am to be able to do Monsieur Thuillier some little service, and how I wish I could be of use to your brother——"

"In short," said Céleste, "you love the whole family?"

"Well, yes," replied Félix.

True love always shrouds itself in the mystery of bashfulness, even in its mode of expressing itself, for it is its own evidence; it does not feel, as spurious love feels, the need for lighting a blaze; and an observer, if he could have stolen into the Thuilliers' drawing-room, could have written a book on the two scenes he might have compared—la Peyrade's elaborate advances, and the perfect simplicity of Félix; this was nature, that was society; truth and falsehood face to face. Indeed, Flavie, as she saw her daughter radiating rapture from every pore of her happy face in the loveliness of a young girl gathering the first roses of an unspoken declaration, Flavie felt a pang of jealousy in her heart, and came to whisper in Céleste's ear:

"You are not behaving nicely, my child; everybody is looking at you, and you are compromising yourself by talking so long with Monsieur Félix without knowing whether we approve."

"But, mamma, my godmother is here."

"I beg your pardon, my dear friend," cried Madame Colleville, "I did not see you."

"Like everybody else," said Saint John Chrysostom.

This reply nettled Flavie, who took it as a barbed shaft; she glanced haughtily at Félix, and said to Céleste: "Sit down there, my dear," and seating herself by Madame Thuillier, she pointed to a chair at her side.

"I will work myself to death," said Félix to Madame Thuillier, "or be made a member of the Academy of Sciences, and I will achieve some great discovery to win her by the power of fame."

"Ah!" thought the poor woman to herself, "a gentle, quiet

man of learning, like this, would have been the husband for me! I might have developed slowly in peaceful shade. But thou, God, wouldst not have it so. Unite and protect these two children! They are made for each other."

She sat pensive, listening to the witches' clatter made by her sister-in-law, a perfect horse at hard work, who was lending a hand to the two maids clearing the table, and removing all the furniture from the dining-room, to make way for the dancers, shouting orders all the time, like the captain on the poop of a frigate preparing for battle. "Is there any currant syrup left? Go out and get some *orgeat*. There are not enough glasses, and too little wine and water; take the six bottles of *ordinaire* that I have just fetched up. Take care that Coffinet, the porter, does not get at it! Caroline, you, child, must stand by the sideboard. You shall have a slice of ham if they keep it up till one in the morning. Mind that nothing is wasted; keep an eye on everything. Give me the broom, and go to fill up the lamps; be careful to have no accidents. Arrange the remains of the dessert so as to dress the sideboard. I wonder if my sister would ever think of helping. I can't imagine what that dawdle finds to think about—good Heavens, how slow she is! There, take away the chairs and they will have more room."

The drawing-room was full of Barniols, Collevilles, Laudigeois, Phellions, and a dozen more, attracted by the rumor that had taken wind in the Luxembourg between two and four, when all the respectable inhabitants of the quarter were out walking, that there was to be dancing that evening at the Thuilliers'.

"Now, Brigitte, are you ready?" said Colleville, rushing into the dining-room. "It is nine o'clock, and they are packed into the drawing-room like herrings in a barrel. Cardot has just come with his wife, his daughter, and his future son-in-law accompanied by that young Vinet, and the whole of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine is pouring in. We must bring the piano in from the drawing-room, heh?"

He gave the signal by playing a few notes on his clarinet,

and its inviting pipe was answered by a cheer from the drawing-room.

It is unnecessary to describe a dance of this kind. The dresses, faces, conversation, were all in harmony with one detail which will give a sufficient clue to the least lively imagition, since this one fact will show the stamp of character and color. Shabby trays, that had lost their varnish and paint, were handed round with common glasses of wine, wine and water, and *eau sucrée*. Others with glasses of *orgeat* and syrups appeared at much longer intervals.

There were five card-tables for twenty-five players, and eighteen couples of dancers. At one in the morning, Madame Thuillier, Mademoiselle Brigitte, and Madame Phellion and her husband were dragged into the wild performance of a country dance known as the *Boulangère,* in which Dutocq figured with his face and head wrapped up like a Khabeel Arab. The servants waiting for their masters and those belonging to the house looked on, and when this interminable round had lasted an hour, and Brigitte announced supper, they wanted to carry her in triumph; she, however, perceived the desirability of concealing a dozen bottles of Burgundy.

Everybody was so well amused, the mothers as well as the girls, that Thuillier could say:

"Well, we little thought this morning that we should have such fun to-night."

"Nothing is more enjoyable," said Cardot, "than this sort of impromptu dance. Don't talk to me of parties to which every one comes stiff and starch."

This view is an axiom among the middle classes.

"Pooh!" said Madame Minard, "'I love Papa, I love Mamma.'"

"We were not saying this with reference to you, madame; where you are pleasure dwells," said Dutocq.

The dance being ended Théodose dragged Dutocq away from the sideboard, where he was helping himself to a slice of tongue.

"Come away," said he, "we must be with Cérizet the first

thing in the morning to get all the information we can about the business which we must both think over. It is not so easy as Cérizet fancies."

"How is that?" said Dutocq, carrying his slice of tongue to eat in the drawing-room.

"Why, you know the laws?"

"I know enough to be aware of any risk there may be in the matter. If the notary wishes for the house and we are beforehand with him, he has ways and means of getting it from us; he can take the name of some creditor on the schedule. In the present state of the law of mortgage, when a house is sold at the requisition of one creditor, if the price offered for it by contract is not enough to pay all the creditors, they have a right to demand that it shall be sold by auction; and the notary, if he has been caught once, will be on the alert."

"Well, then," said la Peyrade, "that must be seen to."

"Very good; we will go to talk to Cérizet."

These words "talk to Cérizet," were overheard by young Minard, who was immediately behind the other two; but they conveyed no sense to his mind. These men were so far out of his ken, his needs, and his plans that he heard without understanding.

"This has been one of the greatest days of our life," said Brigitte when, at about half-past two in the morning, she found herself alone with her brother in the deserted drawing-room. "What an honor to be chosen by your fellow-citizens?"

"But make no mistake, Brigitte, we owe all this, my girl, to one man."

"To whom?"

"To our friend, la Peyrade."

It was not on the next day, Monday, but on Tuesday morning, that Dutocq and Théodose went to call on Cérizet, Dutocq having pointed out that Cérizet was always away on Sunday and Monday, taking advantage of the complete stag-

nation of business on these two days which the common people always devote to dissipation.

The house to which they made their way is one of the most conspicuous features of the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, and it is quite as important to give a description of it here as of those inhabited by Thuillier and Phellion. It is not known—to be sure, no commission has yet been appointed to go into the question—for what reason, or by what process certain quarters of Paris sink lower and lower, becoming more squalid, both morally and physically; why the former centres of the Court and the Church-magnates, the Luxembourg, and the "Latin" quarter sank to be what they now are, in spite of owning one of the finest palaces in the world, in spite of the soaring dome of Sainte-Geneviève, and that by Mansard of the Val-de-Grâce, and the attractions of the Jardin des Plantes. We wonder why the graces of life are disappearing; how it is that the houses of Vauquer and Phellion and Thuillier swarm here, and poor boarding-houses where once stood so many noble and religious dwellings; and why mud and dirty forms of industry and poverty have settled on this hill instead of finding wider space outside the noble and ancient city?

The angelic spirit, whose benevolence had once blessed the neighborhood, being dead, the lowest form of money-lending has become rife. After such a man as Popinot, Cérizet had come in; and the strange thing, noteworthy as a study of life, is that the results, socially speaking, were hardly distinguishable. Popinot lent on no interest, and could bear to lose; Cérizet lost nothing and compelled the poorest to work hard and learn prudence. The poor had worshiped Popinot; but they did not hate Cérizet. In this we see the lowest cog-wheel of Parisian finance. At the top are the Nucingens' house, the Kellers, the du Tillets, the Mongenods; a little lower come Palma, Gigonnet, Gobseck; lower still Samanon, Chaboisseau, Barbet; and beneath them all, beneath the *Mont-de-Piété*, the omnipresent usury which spreads its snares at every street corner to entrap every form of misery, and misses none,—the spider Cérizet.

The man's braided coat has been enough already to give you a hint of the lair of this refuse of the joint-stock company and criminal court.

It was a house leprous with nitrous salts; the walls, oozy with dank sweat, were mottled all over with large patches of mildew. It stood at the corner of two streets, Rue des Postes and Rue des Poules. The ground floor was partly occupied by a wine-shop of the lowest class, painted bright red, hung with red cotton curtains, furnished with a lead-covered counter, and closed by formidable bars.

Above the door of a horrible entry hung a swing lamp on which *"Beds"* were announced. The walls were patterned with cross-clamps, showing how rickety the structure was; the tavern keeper was the owner, and occupied the entresol as well as the ground floor. The furnished rooms were let by Madame *Veuve* Poiret (*née* Michonneau), and these consisted of the first, second, and third floors, arranged to meet the purses of workmen and the very poorest students.

Cérizet had two rooms, one on the ground floor and one on the entresol, up to which he had a private staircase; the upper room had a window on a horrible paved courtyard from which rose mephitic odors. Cérizet paid the widow Poiret forty francs a month for his breakfast and dinner; he had thus conciliated the landlady by being her boarder, and the wine-shop keeper by bringing him an enormous business in wine and spirits, money turned over before the sun was up. For Master Cadenet's shop was open even before Cérizet's office, and he began business on Tuesday mornings at three in summer and at about five in winter.

The opening of the central market, the goal of many of his clients, male and female, fixed the time when his dreadful transactions began. And Cadenet, of the wine-shop, in consideration of the business he owed solely to Cérizet, let him the two rooms for twenty-four francs a year, and had signed a lease for twelve years with the option on Cérizet's part only of giving three months' notice at any time, without any compensation. Cadenet brought up a bottle of capital wine

every day for his invaluable lodger's dinner; and if, at any time, Cérizet were short of cash, he had only to say: "Cadenet, my good fellow, lend me a hundred crowns." And he always honestly repaid him.

Cadenet, it was said, had positive proof that the widow Poiret had entrusted two thousand francs to Cérizet, which may account for the increase of his business since he first settled in the quarter with his last thousand-franc note and Dutocq's introduction. Cadenet, prompted by avarice enhanced by prosperity, had, since the beginning of the year, offered his friend Cérizet the use of twenty thousand francs; but Cérizet had refused the loan, saying that the risks he ran were of a character to cause differences between partners.

"I could only give you six per cent," said he; "and you can do better than that in your own line. We will form a partnership by and by for some serious undertaking; but a really good opening would cost us at least fifty thousand francs; and when you have as much as that—well, we will talk about it."

Cérizet had given Théodose the chance of the job over the house, after clearly perceiving that they three—Madame Poiret, Cadenet, and himself—could never find a hundred thousand francs.

The petty usurer was perfectly safe in this den, where at need he could have strong assistance. On some mornings there would be not less than from sixty to eighty persons, men and women, either in the wine-shop, or lounging in the entry, or sitting on the steps, or in the office, to which the cautious money-lender never admitted more than six persons at once. The first comers were the first served, and as each one was only admitted in his turn, the tavern-keeper or his man chalked the numbers on the men's hats and on the women's backs.

Then there was a sale and exchange of early for back numbers, as among cabmen on a stand. On certain days, when market business was pressing, a first number was worth a glass of brandy and a sou. Those who came out called the

next numbers to be admitted, and if any squabbles arose, Cadenet had them to rights by observing:

"If you bring up the watch and the police, what good would that do you? He would have to shut up shop."

He was Cérizet. When, in the course of the day, a wretched woman in despair, with no bread in the house and children faint with hunger, came to borrow ten or twenty sous: "Is he in?" she would ask the wine-seller or his assistant.

Cadenet, a short, fat man dressed in blue, with deep, black linen cuffs and an apron, and a cap on his head, was as an angel of mercy to these poor mothers when he replied:

"He told me you were an honest soul, and I might give you forty sous. You know what you have to do——" And, strange to say, *he* was blest, as Popinot had been before him.

On Sunday morning, when accounts were made up, Cérizet was abused; still more was he cursed on Saturday, when borrowers had to work hard to find the sum lent and the interest on it. Still, he was Providence, he was God, from Tuesday to Friday every week.

The room he sat in, formerly the kitchen of the first floor rooms, was bare; the beams overhead, now white-washed, showed traces of smoke. The walls, along which he had placed wooden benches, and the stone quarries of the floor, alternately absorbed and exhaled the damp. The hood of the chimney had not been removed; but instead of a hearth, there was an iron stove in which Cérizet burnt sea-coal when the weather was cold. Under the high chimney opening, the hearth was covered with boards about six inches higher than the floor and six feet square, on which stood a table worth perhaps a franc, and a wooden chair with a circular cushion covered with green leather. The wall behind him Cérizet had faced with match-boarding; he was also shut in by a screen of unpainted deal on each side to shelter him from the draught from the window and door; but this screen did not intercept the warmth from the stove. The inside shutters of the window were enormously thick and lined with sheet-iron, with a bar to fasten them, and the door commanded respect by the same plate armor.

In the further corner of the room was a spiral stair, out of some shop that had been pulled down, purchased second hand in the Rue Chapon by Cadenet, who had had it fitted to the floor of the room above. To cut off all communication between the room on the entresol and the first floor, Cérizet had insisted on having the door of his upper room bricked up. Thus the residence was a citadel. The man's bedroom furniture consisted of a carpet bought for twenty francs, a school-boy's bed, a chest of drawers, two chairs, and an arm-chair, with an iron chest looking like a desk—the work of a capital maker, and bought second hand. He shaved in front of the glass over the chimney. He possessed two pairs of cotton sheets, six calico shirts, and the rest to match. Once or twice Cadenet had seen Cérizet dressed as a man of fashion; so that it was evident that he kept hidden away in the bottom drawer a complete outfit, in which he could go to the opera or even into society without being identified; for on these occasions Cadenet himself, but for the sound of his lodger's voice, would have asked him: "What would you please to want?"

What most charmed his "customers" was his geniality, his power of repartee; he spoke their language. Cadenet, his two shopmen, and Cérizet lived surrounded by the utmost misery, but preserved the indifference of a mute among the heirs of the deceased, of old sergeants of the Guard amid the killed; they no more groaned when they listened to cries of hunger or despair than surgeons groan on hearing their patients in the hospital; like soldiers and sick nurses, they were always ready with the trivial advice: "Have patience; a little spirit. What is the use of breaking your heart over it? If you kill yourself, what then? You can grow used to anything; a little common sense."

Though Cérizet always took the precaution of hiding the cash necessary for his morning's transactions in the seat of the chair he sat on, of taking out no more than a hundred francs at a time, which he kept in his trousers pockets, and of never going to the reserve but between two batches of cus-

tomers, behind locked doors, which he did not open till he had pocketed the coin he took out; he really had nothing to fear from the despairing souls who came from all parts to this fountain-head of money. There are, no doubt, many ways of being honest or virtuous, and the *Monograph on Virtue** is exclusively based on this social axiom. A man first sins against his conscience; then he conspicuously sins against that delicate bloom of honor, the loss of which does not mean general disrepute; finally he fails distinctly in honesty; but though he falls into the hands of the police, he still is not yet amenable to the assizes; and even after the disgrace of being condemned by a jury, he may be respected on the hulks if he maintains the sort of honor that exists among villains, and which consists in telling no tales, in always playing fair, in sharing every risk.

Well, this last rag of honesty, which is perhaps self-interest and necessity, while the practice of it leaves a man some chance of magnanimity and some return to better ways, existed in perfection between Cérizet and his clients. Cérizet never made a mistake, nor did his poor debtors; they told each other no lies, neither as to capital nor interest. On many occasions, Cérizet, who was, after all, a man of the people, had rectified one week the involuntary mistake of a previous reckoning to the advantage of the wretched creatures who had not discovered it. So he was regarded as a dog, but an honest dog; in the midst of that city of woes his word was sacred.

A woman died, thirty francs in his debt.

"These are my profits!" exclaimed he to his customers; "and you howl at me! But I shall not torment the brats. And Cadenet has taken them bread and thin wine."

After this—a very skilful stroke of business—his neighbors would say:

"He is not a bad sort of man."

* *Monographie de la Vertu*: a work in the same vein as the *Physiologie du Mariage* at which the author has been working since 1833, the date when it was first announced.—*Author's note.*

Short loans at high interest, as practised by Cérizet, is not, take it all round, so cruel a system as that of the Mont-de-Piété. Cérizet lent ten francs on Tuesday on condition of getting twelve back on the following Sunday. In five weeks he had doubled his capital; but compositions were frequent. His good nature was shown from time to time in accepting only eleven francs, fifty centimes: the rest stood over. When he lent fifty francs for sixty to a small green-grocer, or a hundred for a hundred and twenty to a peat-seller, he ran some risk.

Théodose and Dutocq, coming down the Rue des Postes to the Rue des Poules, saw a mob of men and women, and by the light from the lamps in the wine-shop they were alarmed at perceiving this mass of red faces, seamed and distorted and dejected by misery, withered or bloated or bald, thickened by wine, emaciated by fiery spirits, some threatening and some resigned, some jeering, some sarcastic, others stupefied, and all clad in the ignominious rags which no caricaturist can exaggerate, even in his most extravagant moods.

"Some one will recognize me," said la Peyrade, dragging Dutocq away. "We are fools to have come to find him in the midst of his business."

"Especially as we never thought that Claparon might be sleeping in his den, which is unknown to us as far as the interior is concerned. Look here; though there are difficulties in your way, there are none in mine. I may have something to say to my copying clerk, and I will go and tell him to come to dinner, for the Courts sit to-day, and we shall not have time for breakfast. We will fix to meet at the *Chaumière,* in one of the arbors in the garden."

"That is no good; we may be overheard without knowing it. I prefer the *Petit Rocher de Cancale;* we can take a box and talk low."

"And if you are seen with Cérizet?"

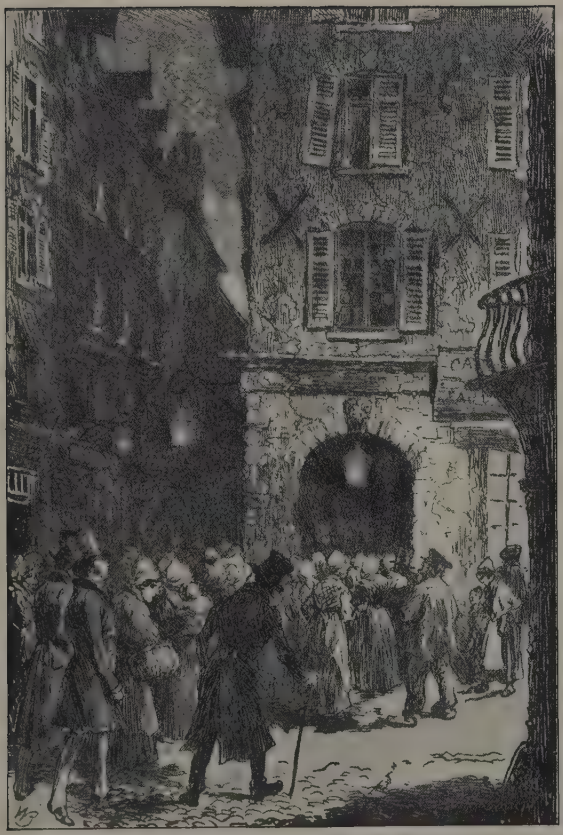
"Well, then, let us go to the *Cheval Rouge,* on the Quai de Tournelle."

"That is better; at seven o'clock there will be no one there."

Theodore and Dutocq, coming down the [illegible], saw a mob of men and women

midst of his business."

"Tournelle."



Théodore and Dutocq, coming down the Rue des Postes, saw a mob of men and women

So Dutocq made his way alone among this congress of beggars, and he heard his name on all sides; for he could not fail to be recognized by some one who had been in the dock, just as Théodose would have been by some clients.

In such a neighborhood the Justice of the peace (equivalent to the County Court Magistrate in London) is the supreme legal authority; every case ends in his court, especially now that the law makes his decisions final in every case where the sum in dispute is not more than a hundred and forty francs. So the Justice's clerk was allowed to pass—a person of no less worship than the judge himself. On the steps women were sitting, a horrible display, like flowers arranged in stages; and among them were some young, some pale and suffering. The variety of colors in handkerchiefs, caps, gowns, and aprons made the comparison more exact, perhaps, than any comparison ought to be.

When Dutocq opened the door of the room where sixty people had already been interviewed, he was almost asphyxiated.

"Your number? What is your number?" shouted a chorus of voices.

"Hold your jaw!" cried a hoarse voice from the street. "He is the Justice's quill-driver."

Utter silence ensued.

Dutocq found his copying clerk dressed in a buff leather waistcoat, like the gloves worn by the gendarmes, and over it a squalid vest of knitted worsted. The unwholesome physiognomy may be imagined above this ungainly garb, crowned by a shabby bandana wound about his head so as to show the forehead and hairless nape, and giving the features a look as repulsive as it was sinister, especially by the light of a dip, twelve to the pound.

"It cannot be done on those terms, Daddy Lantimêche," Cérizet was saying to a tall old man, who looked at least seventy, and who stood before him, his red worsted cap in his hand, showing a bald head, while a chest covered with white hairs was visible under his shabby blouse. "Explain

to me what you want it for. A hundred francs, even with a hundred and twenty to come in, cannot be turned loose like a dog in a church."

The other five clients present, among whom were two nursing mothers, one knitting, the other suckling her baby,—shouted with laughter.

Cérizet, when he saw Dutocq, rose respectfully to meet him, as he added:

"You can have time to think about it; for you see I am not satisfied to find an old smith's laborer wanting so much as a hundred francs."

"But it is to start an invention!" cried the old workman.

"An invention—and a hundred francs! You do not know what the law is; you will want two thousand," said Dutocq. "You must take out a patent; you must find patrons."

"It is quite true," said Cérizet, who often relied on chances of this kind. "Here, Daddy Lantimêche, come again tomorrow morning at six o'clock and we will talk about it. We cannot discuss an invention before other people."

Cérizet listened to Dutocq, whose first words were:

"If it is any good, we will go halves."

"Why on earth did you get up so early to tell me that?" said the suspicious money-lender, much annoyed at this notion of "halves." "You would have seen me at the office."

He looked askance at Dutocq, who, while telling him the truth, and speaking of Claparon and the necessity for taking up la Peyrade's business as promptly as possible, seemed to obscure matters.

"Well, you could have seen me at the office in the course of the morning," he repeated, as he saw Dutocq to the door.

"There is a fellow," said he to himself, as he returned to his seat, "who seems to me to have blown out the lantern for fear I should see too much. Well, I can give up my place as copying clerk.—What! you, mother," he went on aloud; "you invent children, don't you? It is a funny game, though rather played out."

It is needless to report the interview between these three schemers; all the more so because the decisions they arrived at were the basis of la Peyrade's confidences afterwards to Mademoiselle Thuillier; but it may be said that the Provençal's craftiness almost dismayed Cérizet and Dutocq. When the conference was over, the idea had dawned in the petty usurer's mind of throwing up his hand in the game, as he found himself pledged to partnership with such strong players. To win at any cost and beat the sharpest, even by cheating if need be, is an inspiration of vanity peculiar to the votaries of the green cloth. This led to the terrible blow which la Peyrade was fated to receive.

However, he knew his two associates; and notwithstanding the perpetual turmoil of intellectual effort in which he lived, and the incessant watchfulness needed to keep up his manifold impersonations, nothing fatigued him more than the part he had to play with these two accomplices. Dutocq was a thorough scoundrel, and Cérizet had been on the stage; they could see through any mask. An immovable face *à la* Talleyrand would have led them to throw over the Provençal who was now in their power, and he was forced to affect ease and confidence, and play above board—which is no doubt the highest achievement of art. To deceive the pit is an everyday success, but to take in Mademoiselle Mars, Frédérick Lemaitre, Potier, Talma, Monrose, is the triumph of acting.

The result of this interview was to produce in Théodose, who was as sagacious as Cérizet, a secret fear which, towards the end of this closely fought game, fevered his blood and stirred his pulses to the pitch of putting him into the morbid state of a player with his eye on the roulette board when he has risked his last stake. His senses acquire a lucidity, his intelligence attains a breadth of purview for which human knowledge has no measure.

On the day after this meeting, la Peyrade dined with the Thuilliers; and Thuillier, under the obvious pretext of having to pay a call on Madame de Saint-Foudrille,—the wife of a man of science with whom he was anxious to become in-

timate,—went off after dinner with his wife, leaving Théodose with Brigitte. Neither Thuillier, nor his sister, nor Théodose, was the dupe of this manœuvre, and the old buck of the Empire dignified the farce by the name of diplomacy.

"Young man, do not take advantage of my sister's guilelessness, but respect it," said Thuillier, solemnly, before going out.

"Has it occurred to you, mademoiselle," said Théodose, drawing his chair closer to Brigitte as she sat knitting, "to secure the interest of the commercial class of the district for Thuillier?"

"How?" said she.

"Well, you have business connections with Barbet and Métivier."

"To be sure, you are right. By jingo! but you are no fool," she added after a pause.

"We are always ready to serve those we love," he replied with sententious reserve.

To get the better of Brigitte in the long struggle begun two years ago, would be to hold the key of the position, like carrying the redoubt at the Moskowa. But the only way was to get the mastery of her mind, as, in the middle ages, people were believed to be possessed of the Devil, and so effectually that no undeceiving should ever be possible. For three days past, la Peyrade had been taking measure of the undertaking, and had walked all round it, as it were, to reconnoitre the position. Flattery, the infallible weapon in skilled hands, could have no effect on an old maid who had long known that she had no beauty. But to a determined man no place is impregnable—a Lamarque can always seize Caprea. So no detail must be omitted of the eventful scene of that evening; every point had its value—pauses, downcast looks, glances, tones of voice.

"You have already proved your affection for us," said Brigitte.

"Your brother has told you?"

"No; he only said that you wished to speak to me."

"Yes, mademoiselle, for you are the man of the family. But, on thinking matters over, I perceived no little danger for myself in this affair, and a man does not compromise himself unless for those near and dear to him. There is a perfect fortune in the scales—thirty to forty thousand francs a year —and not in the least speculative. A freehold. The necessity for providing Thuillier with a fortune bewitched me from the first. It was fascinating and, as I told him,—for, short of being an idiot, a man asks himself: 'Why on earth should he be so eager to help me?'—well, as I told him, by working for his advantage, I flattered myself I might be working for my own.

"Now, if he wishes to be a member of the Chamber, two things are requisite: he must pay the taxes on a sufficient qualification, and get his name known by some sort of celebrity. If I carry my devotion so far as to be ready to help him to write a book on Public Credit,—or on no matter what, —I might certainly also think of his fortune, and it would be absurd in you to give him this house——"

"To my brother? Why, I would place it in his name to-morrow," cried Brigitte; "you do not know me."

"I do not altogether know you," said Théodose; "but I know things of you which have made me regret that I did not tell you everything from the first moment when I formed the plan to which Thuillier will owe his election. He will be the object of envy at once, and he will certainly have an uphill task; we must annihilate his rivals, deprive them of every pretext."

"But this business," said Brigitte; "what are the obstacles?"

"Mademoiselle, they exist in my conscience, and I cannot serve you in the matter till I have consulted my confessor. As far as the world is concerned, oh! the transaction is perfectly legal, I am incapable—I, as you understand, a duly registered advocate, and the member of a somewhat rigid association—am incapable, I say, of suggesting an arrangement which could give rise to a scandal. My first excuse is, that I will not take a farthing."

Brigitte was on hot irons; her face was flushed, she broke her wool, and knotted it together, and did not know how to contain herself.

"A freehold worth forty thousand a year," said she, "is not to be bought nowadays for less than one million eight hundred thousand francs."

"Well, I promise you that you shall see the property, and calculate the probable returns, and that I will secure it to Thuillier for fifty thousand."

"Well, if you will enable us to get that," cried Brigitte, worked up to the highest point of excitement by the tempest of her avarice, "go, my dear Monsieur Théodose——"

She stopped short.

"Well, mademoiselle?"

"You *will*, perhaps, have worked for your own advantage."

"Oh, if Thuillier has told you my secret, I leave your house."

Brigitte looked up.

"Did he tell you that I love Céleste?"

"No, on my word of honor!" cried Brigitte. "But I was going to speak of her."

"To offer her to me? Nay, God forgive me, but I would not wish to owe her to any one but herself, her parents, her own free choice. No, all I ask of you is your good-will, your favor. Promise me, as Thuillier has promised, as the reward of my service, your influence, your friendship; tell me that you will regard me as a son—and then I will take your advice. I will decide in obedience to your views without consulting my confessor. Why, for two years, during which I have studied the family with which I would gladly ally my name and which I should be happy to enrich by my energy—for I am bound to get on—I have not failed to discover that you have an old world honesty, a spirit of inflexible rectitude, and knowledge of business—and those are the qualities a man likes to have about him. With such a mother-in-law as you, I should find domestic life swept clear of a thousand money de-

tails which hamper a man's political advancement, when he has to think of them. How I admired you on Sunday evening! You were magnificent! How you made things fly! In ten minutes, I believe, the drawing-room was cleared; and without stirring out of the house you had everything at hand for refreshments and supper. 'There,' said I to myself, 'that is a capable woman!'"

Brigitte's nostrils dilated, she inhaled the young lawyer's adulation, and he gave her a side glance, enjoying her triumph. He had touched a responsive chord.

"Oh," said she, "I am accustomed to housekeeping—it answers to my hand."

"Yes," said Théodose, "if I can consult a clear and pure conscience I shall be satisfied."

He had risen, but he now sat down again and said:

"This is how the business stands, my dear aunt; for you will be a sort of aunt."

"Hold your tongue, dear boy," said Brigitte, "and tell me the facts."

"I will tell you exactly, and observe that I am risking my reputation by divulging them; for I owe my knowledge of such secrets to my position as a lawyer, so we are committing between us a sort of legal high treason. A Paris notary and an architect entered into partnership to buy some building land, and built upon it; at this moment they have collapsed; there was some error in their calculations, but we need not trouble ourselves about all that. Among the houses erected by this illicit firm—for notaries are not supposed to go into business partnerships—there is one which, being unfinished, is so under value that it is offered for sale for no more than a hundred thousand francs, though the ground and structure cost four hundred thousand. As nothing remains to be finished but the interior fittings,—and nothing can be easier to estimate; as, moreover, those fittings are all ready at the builder's, and he will sell them cheap,—the sum to be spent will not exceed fifty thousand francs. Now the house, being in a good position, it will let for forty thousand francs a

year, taxes paid. It is built entirely of squared stone, and the party walls of stone rubble; the front is decorated with handsome sculpture that cost more than twenty thousand francs; the windows are of plate-glass, with a new kind of bolt called *Crémone.*"

"Where is the difficulty?"

"Ah! that is the point. The notary has reserved this plum of the cake he has to surrender, and under the name of his friends he is one of the creditors who demand the sale of the property under the assignees' order. There was no action at law, that is too costly; the sale is under a voluntary declaration. Well, the notary happened to apply to a client of mine for the use of his name as the purchaser; my client is a poor devil, and he came to me and said: 'There is a fortune in the thing if you can get rid of the notary.'"

"It is often done in trade," said Brigitte eagerly.

"If this were the only difficulty," replied Théodose, "it would be plain sailing; as a friend of mine said to one of his pupils, who was lamenting the immense difficulties in the way of producing a masterpiece of art: 'My dear boy, if it were not so the footman would do it!' But, mademoiselle, even if we caught this dreadful notary who, you may take my word for it, richly deserves it, for he has taken toll of many a private fortune—as he is very sharp, though he is a notary, it will probably be very hard to trip him up twice. When you purchase real estate, if the mortgagees think they are likely to be losers by the low price, they have the right within a certain limit of time to put up the price, that is to say, to offer a larger sum and keep the property. If the first bidder cannot play this fish till the time has elapsed for his raising the price, another kind of trick must be tried. But are such dealings legal? Dare a man undertake them for the benefit of the family he hopes to belong to? For three days I have been asking myself these questions."

Brigitte, it must be confessed, hesitated, and Théodose then put forward his last suggestion.

"Take the night to think of it; to-morrow we will talk it over."

"Listen, my boy," said Brigitte, looking at the lawyer almost amorously, "in the first place I must see the house. Where is it?"

"Not far from the Madeleine; in ten years it will be the heart of Paris! And if you did but know it, that land has been rising in value ever since 1819. Du Tillet the banker's fortune was made there. The famous bankruptcy of Roguin the notary, which spread terror in Paris and was such a blow to the reputation of his cloth,—the bankruptcy which ruined Birotteau the famous perfumer,—was caused by that alone. They had speculated a little too wildly in that land."

"I remember," said Brigitte.

"The house could certainly be finished by the end of this year, and tenants could come in by the middle of next year."

"Can we go there to-morrow?"

"Aunt, I am at your orders."

"Mercy! never call me aunt before other people. As to business, I cannot decide till I have seen the house."

"It is six stories high, has nine windows across the front, a spacious courtyard, and four shops, and it stands at a corner. Oh, the notary knew what he was about, never fear! But if some political change occurs the funds and investments generally will go down. In your place I would sell all Madame Thuillier holds, and all you hold in the State funds, to buy this fine property for Thuillier, and I would reinstate that poor bigot's fortune out of future savings. Can consols go higher than they are now—a hundred and twenty-two? It is fabulous; you must make haste."

Brigitte's mouth watered; she saw a way to save her own capital and to enrich her brother at Madame Thuillier's expense.

"My brother is right," said she to Théodose; "you are a very remarkable man and will go far."

"And he will walk before me," said la Peyrade in an artless way which captivated the old maid.

"You will be one of the family," said she.

"There will be obstacles!" said Théodose. "Madame Thuillier is a little crazy and she does not like me."

"I would like to see her interfere," cried Brigitte. "Let us do the job if it is feasible," she added, "and leave your interests in my hands."

"Thuillier, a member of the Municipal Council, possessed of a house that will let for at least forty thousand francs, a member of the Legion of Honor, and the author of a solid, serious book, will be returned as deputy at one of the coming elections. But, between you and me, my little aunt, a man only devotes himself so entirely to his real father-in-law."

"You are right."

"Though I have no fortune, I shall have doubled yours; and if this affair is not talked about, I will try to find others."

"Until I have seen the house," said Mademoiselle Thuillier, "I can come to no decision."

"Well, then, take a hackney coach to-morrow and we will go; I will get a ticket to view the premises to-morrow morning."

"Till to-morrow then at about twelve," replied Brigitte, holding out her hand to Théodose; but instead of merely taking it he pressed a kiss on it, at once more tender and more respectful than Brigitte had ever received.

"Good-bye, my dear boy," said she as he went out at the door.

She hastily rang the bell, and when one of the maids appeared:

"Joséphine," said she, "go at once to Madame Colleville, and ask her to come to see me."

A quarter of an hour later, Flavie came into the room, where Brigitte was pacing to and fro in alarming excitement.

"My dear, I want you to do me a great service in a matter that concerns our little Céleste. You know Tullia, the opera-dancer; time was when my brother dinned her into my ears."

"Yes, my dear, but she is no longer an opera-dancer. She

a Bulwer a Lytton or Scott. Is she for instant a test of a man?"

"Are you still friends?"

"We never are really wives."

"Well, but I suppose a woman can influence the mind of a man," said the old man. "She is old, to a woman, at the age that all men are in their prime. A man likes a woman who has grown old with him, who has been a good wife, who has had to do with the great political matters in which the husband is mixed, who has been a helpmate, and who is worthy of the honors she receives. But she must expect to be taken for most political matters."

"Yes, my dear girl," the darling Diane said to a self-satisfied, and I will bet a hundred francs to-morrow will have her own friends."

"Shall I tell you the five letters of the name?"

"Well, speak."

"Charles-de-la-Bourdaisière. You are in the right. He is a man who, with his subject and a woman to rule, may not be a minister."

"And himself, and like a fool," cried the old man.

At this moment Madame and Madame Vauthier came home.

Two days later, in the month of April, the week ending on the eighth of the month, the Council of Ten, a committee of the Municipal Council, was formed at the Hôtel-de-Ville. The Minister having at his disposal the Fund of Works, had met often for some weeks.

Jacques was in very good humor; she had received in Parmilla's salon. The whole Municipality despised by the Chaffaroux were going to ruin, was persuaded by him to be friendly with each other, the architect believed in the business with a business and businesslike, believed that he was working for the common business in Paris's work supposed that the town's interests were so safe, and he said

that he would finish the house for thirty thousand francs. So, for the past week, Théodose had been Brigitte's idol; she argued with the most artless dishonesty to prove to him that fortune must be snatched at when it offers.

"And if there is any sin in this business," said she, as they stood in the middle of the garden, "you will tell it in confession."

"The deuce is in it," cried Thuillier; "a man's first duty is to his relations."

"I will do it," said la Peyrade in a broken voice, "but on certain conditions. I will not be taxed with greed and avarice in marrying Céleste. If you load me with remorse, at any rate let me maintain my character in the eyes of the world. Only settle on Céleste—you, my dear old boy, Thuillier—the reversion of the house I am about to secure for you."

"That is wise."

"Do not rob yourselves," Théodose went on; "and my dear little aunt must agree to this when the settlements are made. Place all the rest of the capital at your command in the funds, in Madame Thuillier's name, and let her do what she likes with it. We shall then all live together, and I will undertake to make my own fortune as soon as I am relieved of anxiety as to my future maintenance."

"Done with you!" exclaimed Thuillier; "that is the speech of an honest man."

"Let me kiss your forehead, my boy," cried the old maid. "Still, as a girl must have some money, we will give Céleste sixty thousand francs."

"For her pin-money," said la Peyrade.

"We are all three people of honor," cried Thuillier. "It is a settled thing; you will secure us the house, we will write my political book together, and you will move the earth to get me the Legion of Honor."

"Oh! You will have it as surely as you will be elected Town Councillor by the first of May. Only, my good friend, and you, too, my little aunt, be secret, and pay no heed to

the calumnies that will be hurled at me when the men I must deceive turn against me. I shall be a vagabond, a swindler, a dangerous man, a Jesuit, an intriguer, a fortune-hunter.—Can you listen unmoved to all this?"

"Be easy," said Brigitte.

From that day forth Thuillier was "my dear fellow"; this was the name by which Théodose always addressed him, with shades of tone and an expression of affection which surprised Flavie. But "little aunt," the words that so delighted Brigitte, were spoken only before the Thuilliers, or in a whisper if anybody were present, or, now and then, before Flavie.

The activity displayed by Théodose, Dutocq, and Cérizet, by Barbet, Métivier, the Minards, the Phellions, the Laudigeois, by Colleville, Pron, Barniol, and their friends, was prodigious. Great and small set their hands to the task. Cadenet secured thirty votes in his division, and wrote the names of seven electors who could only set their cross.

On the thirtieth of April, Thuillier was duly elected a member of the Municipal Council for the Department of the Seine, by an imposing majority, for only sixty votes kept his election from being unanimous. On the first of May Thuillier joined that municipal body in going to the Tuileries to congratulate the king on his *fête* day, and he came home beaming; he had followed close on Minard's heels.

A yellow poster, ten days later, announced the sale of the house by voluntary act of the owners, the reserved price being seventy-five thousand francs; the sale to be concluded at the end of July. On this point there was an agreement—verbal, of course—between Claparon and Cérizet, by which Cérizet promised Claparon a bonus of fifteen thousand francs if he only succeeded in putting off the notary till beyond the time allowed for a higher bid. Mademoiselle Thuillier, informed of this by Théodose, gave full consent to this secret clause, understanding that she would have to pay the abettors of this amiable treachery. The money was to be paid through the virtuous advocate.

Claparon held a meeting at midnight, in the Place de l'Observatoire, with his other accomplice, the notary, whose office and connection, though put up for sale by a decision delivered in the court for regulating the business of Paris notaries, was not yet sold.

This young man, the successor of Leopold Hannequin, had tried to run to fortune instead of walking; he still saw another future before him and was trying to work everything at once. In this interview he had bid as high as ten thousand francs to purchase safety in this dirty job; he was not to pay the sum over to Claparon till after the attesting of a declaration signed by the purchaser. The notary knew that this sum was the only capital at Claparon's disposal to help him to remake his fortune, and he thought himself sure of him.

"Who else in all Paris would give me such a commission for the job?" said Claparon, with an assumption of guilelessness. "You may sleep soundly of nights; I will get the very man to be our stalking-horse as purchaser, one of your honest men who are too stupid to have ideas like yours. He is an old retired clerk; you have only to give him the money to pay and he will sign the papers."

When the notary had made it clear to Claparon that all he could get out of him was ten thousand francs, Cérizet offered his old partner twelve thousand and proceeded to demand fifteen of Théodose, not meaning, of course, to give more than twelve to Claparon. All the scenes between these four men were garnished with fine words about sentiment and honor, about what men owed to each other when they were fated to work together, and to meet again in the course of events. While these submarine transactions were carried out for Thuillier's benefit, Théodose reporting them to him with expressions of utter disgust at having to soil his fingers with such dirty work, these two laid their heads together over the great work which the "dear fellow" was to publish; and the member of the Municipal Council came to the conclusion that he could never achieve anything without this man of genius,

whose talents amazed him and whose readiness constantly astonished him, so that every day made it seem more necessary that he should make la Peyrade his son-in-law. After the month of May Théodose dined with the "dear fellow" four days out of every seven.

At this time indeed Théodose was undisputed monarch of the family, and was approved by all their friends. This was the way of it. The Phellions, hearing Thuillier and Brigitte singing la Peyrade's praises, feared to offend these two potentates and joined in the chorus, even though this perpetual laudation might annoy them or seem exaggerated. It was the same with the Minards. And, indeed, la Peyrade's behavior as the friend of the family was always admirable; he disarmed hostility by effacing himself; he was no more than an additional piece of furniture; he led the Phellions and the Minards to believe that Brigitte and Thuillier had summed him up, weighed him, and found him too light ever to be anything more than the good young man to whom they might be of use.

"Perhaps he thinks," said Thuillier to Minard one day, "that my sister will feather his nest for him in her will. He little knows her."

This speech, prompted by Théodose, soothed Minard's suspicious curiosity.

"He is devoted to us," said the old maid to Phellion one day, "but he owes us a debt of gratitude; we let him off his rent and he almost lives with us."

This contemptuous tone, again inspired by Théodose and echoed from one to another of all the families that haunted Thuillier's drawing-room, dispelled every fear, and Théodose gave effect to the remarks thus uttered by Thuillier and his sister by all the servility of a hanger-on. At whist he screened the "dear fellow's" blunders; his smile, as rigid and benign as Madame Thuillier's, was ready to encourage the homely jests of the brother and the sister alike.

He thus secured what he most ardently aimed at, the contempt of his real enemies, and wrapped himself in it as

in a mantle to hide his power. For four months he preserved the stupid attitude of a snake swallowing and digesting its prey. And he would go into the garden with Colleville or Flavie to lay aside his mask and laugh, and rest and refresh himself by abandoning himself to nervous outbursts of passion which terrified or touched his future mother-in-law.

"Have you no pity for me?" he said to her the day before the signing of the preliminary contract of sale, by which Thuillier became provisionally the owner of the house for twenty-five thousand francs. "Such a man as I! sneaking round like a cat, suppressing every retort, swallowing down my gall! And repelled by you!"

"My friend, my child!" said Flavie, who was still undecided.

These words may serve as a thermometer to show at what temperature this clever actor maintained his intrigue with Flavie. The poor woman wavered between her heart and morality, between religion and the mystery of passion.

Meanwhile Félix Phellion gave young Colleville lessons with praiseworthy regularity and devotion; he bestowed endless hours on him, believing that he was working for the family that would be his. In gratitude for his kindness, and under la Peyrade's advice, the professor was invited to dine on Thursdays with the Collevilles, and Théodose never failed to be there. Flavie would make a purse, or work slippers or a cigar case for the happy youth, who would exclaim:

"I am more than paid, madame, by the happiness of being of use to you."

"We are not rich, monsieur," Colleville would reply, "but, hang it all, we are not ungrateful."

Old Phellion rubbed his hands as he listened to his son on his return from these dinners—he would see his dear, his noble Félix married to Céleste.

Still, the more she loved him the more serious and reserved was Céleste in her demeanor to Félix; all the more

since her mother had spoken to her very decidedly one evening, and ended by saying:—

"Give young Phellion no encouragement, my child. Neither your father nor I can settle whom you are to marry; hopes are founded on your future prospects, and it is far more important to secure the affection of Mademoiselle Brigitte and your godfather than to win the good graces of a penniless professor. If you do not wish to kill your mother, my darling—yes, to kill me,—obey me blindly in this matter, and get it firmly into your head that above all else we aim at seeing you happy."

As the sale of the property was definitely fixed for the end of July, towards the end of June Théodose advised Brigitte to be prepared with the money; and on the eve of the sale, she sold all her own and her sister-in-law's securities in the public funds. The disastrous alliance of the four powers, an insult to France, is a matter of history; but it is necessary to recall the fact that from July till the end of August French stocks, scared by the prospect of war to which Monsieur Thiers lent himself rather too readily, fell twenty francs; three per cents stood at sixty. Nor was this all; this financial rout reacted disastrously on real estate in Paris; land that happened to be in the market was sold for a mere song. These circumstances made Théodose figure as a prophet, as a man of genius in the eyes of Brigitte and Thuillier, to whom the house was assigned at the price of seventy-five thousand francs.

The notary, involved in this political catastrophe, his office being sold, found himself obliged to go into the country for some days; but he took with him Claparon's thousand francs. Thuillier, by la Peyrade's advice, made a contract with Grindot, who believed he was finishing the house for the notary; and as, during this period of financial disturbance, works were to a great extent suspended, and workmen left standing with folded arms, the architect was enabled to finish the house, which he particularly fancied, in a really splendid style.

He decorated four drawing-rooms richly gilt for twenty-five thousand francs. Théodose insisted that the bargain should be in writing, and that fifty thousand francs should be put down instead of twenty-five.

This purchase magnified Thuillier's importance tenfold. As to the notary, he had quite lost his head in the presence of political events which had fallen like a waterspout on a fine day. Théodose, secure of his influence, relying on his many services, and having a hold over Thuillier so long as they were working together, was admired by Brigitte especially for his decent reticence—for he never made the smallest allusion to his poverty, and never talked about money, and he asumed a rather less slavish manner than he had hitherto shown. Thuillier and Brigitte would say to him:

"Nothing can rob you of our esteem; you are at home under our roof. The opinion of Minard and Phellion, of whom you seem so much afraid, is not worth a verse by Victor Hugo to us. Let them talk; hold up your head!"

"We will need their help for Thuillier's election to parliament," said Théodose. "Follow my advice. You find it answers, do not you? When the house is really yours, you will have got it practically for nothing; for you can buy three per cents at sixty in Madame Thuillier's name so as to restitute her whole fortune. You have only to wait till the period allowed by law for a higher bid has elapsed, and to have the fifteen thousand francs in readiness for our rascals."

Brigitte wasted no time; she realized all her own capital excepting a sum of one hundred and twenty thousand francs, and then taking discount off her sister-in-law's fortune, she reinvested two hundred and forty-thousand francs in the three per cents in Madame Thuillier's name, bringing her in twelve thousand francs a year; she also purchased enough to give herself ten thousand francs a year, determining never to worry herself over discounting bills again. She saw her brother with forty thousand francs a year besides his pension; Madame Thuillier with her twelve thousand, while she herself

had eighteen thousand,—sixty thousand francs in all, and rent free, which she estimated at eight thousand.

"We are a match for the Minards now!" cried she.

"We will not sing victory, just yet," said Théodose. "There is yet a week to run before the time is out for raising the bid. I have been attending to your affairs, and my own are in a terrible mess."

"But, my dear boy, you have friends!" exclaimed Brigitte, "and if you want twenty-five louis you can always find them here."

At this speech Théodose and Thuillier smiled at each other.

Thuillier took him into the garden and said:

"My poor sister must be excused; she sees the world through the mouth of a bottle. But if you want twenty-five thousand francs I will lend them to you—out of my first rents," he added.

"Thuillier, I have a rope round my neck," exclaimed Théodose. "Since I became an advocate I have had to sign bills. But mum's the word!" he added, frightened at having betrayed the secret of his position. "I am in the clutches of scoundrels—I should like to turn the tables!"

Théodose had a twofold motive in telling his secret. First to sound Thuillier, and secondly to forefend a terrible blow which might be dealt him in the course of the covert and desperate struggle he had long foreseen. His terrible situation may be explained in a few words.

In the abject poverty he had lived through no one but Cérizet had ever come to see him in the garret where, in the bitterest weather, he was lying in bed for lack of clothes. He had but one shirt belonging to him. For three days he had lived on one loaf, cutting it carefully into portions, and he was wondering: "What is to be done?" when his old ally made his appearance, just released from prison and pardoned.

As to the various schemes plotted by these two men before a fire of faggots, one wrapped in his landlady's counterpane, the other in his infamy, it is useless to record them here.

On the following day, Cérizet, who had come across Dutocq in the course of the morning, brought la Peyrade trousers, waistcoat, and coat, a hat and boots bought at an old-clothes stall in the Temple, and then carried him off to give him a dinner. The Provençal ate at Pinson's eating-house in the Rue de l'Ancienne-Comédie, quite half of a dinner that cost forty-seven francs. At dessert, between two glasses of wine, Cérizet said to his friend:

"Will you sign fifty thousand francs worth of bills for me, calling yourself an advocate?"

"You won't get five thousand for them," replied Théodose.

"That is no affair of yours, you will pay the whole sum. That will be our share—my friend's and mine—of a business in which you will risk nothing, but in which you will gain the title of advocate, a good connection, and the hand of a little girl no older than an old dog, and owning at least twenty to thirty thousand francs a year. Neither Dutocq nor I can marry her; we must rig you out, make you look like a respectable man, feed you, lodge you, give you decent furniture. So we must have some guarantee. I do not speak for myself, but for my friend here, who will use my name. We will fit you out as a corsair to run after the yellow boys, you see! If we do not capture this little fortune we will try some other game. Between ourselves we certainly need not keep our gloves on to save our fingers.

"We will give you your instructions, for the affair must not be hurried; there will be a hard tug, I can tell you! Here, I have some stamps."

"Waiter, a pen and ink!" said Théodose.

"That's the sort of man I like," said Dutocq.

"Sign: *Théodose de la Peyrade,* and add in your own hand, *Avocat, Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer,* under the words *Accepted payable for ten thousand.* We will date it and come upon you for it, all in secret, to have a right to imprison you. The shipowners must hold some security when the captain and the brig are at sea."

On the day following, the bailiffs of the Justice of the

Peace (the County Court) obliged Cérizet by taking secret proceedings; he came in the evening to call on the lawyer, and everything was settled without any public fuss. The Tribunal of Commerce deals with a hundred such cases at every sitting.

The stringent rules of the Council of the Association of Paris Advocates are well known. This body, and that of the Attorneys, exercise strict discipline over their members. An advocate in peril of imprisonment for debt at Clichy would be erased from the register. Consequently, Cérizet, guided by Dutocq, had taken the only course against their puppet which could secure them each twenty-five thousand francs out of Céleste's marriage portion. Théodose, when he endorsed the bills, only thought that he was insuring his prospects; but as by degrees the horizon grew clearer, as he rose step by step, while playing his part, to a higher position in the social scale, his dream was to rid himself of his two associates. And now, when he asked Thuillier for twenty-five thousand francs, it was in the hope of buying back his bills from Cérizet at fifty per cent.

Nor is this a solitary instance, unfortunately, of such an infamous speculation; such transactions are common in Paris under forms too thinly disguised for the historian to omit them from an exact and complete picture of social manners. Dutocq, a chartered libertine, still owed fifteen thousand francs of the price of his office and connection, and in his hopes of success he also hoped, in familiar language, to stretch the tether till the end of the year 1840.

Till this hour, not one of these three men had shied or called out. Each felt his own strength and fully gauged the danger. Their distrust of each other was equal, their watchfulness and assumed confidence; and equally marked were their gloomy silence and looks when reciprocal suspicion was betrayed by their features or their words. For the last two months especially, la Peyrade's position had been acquiring all the strength of an independent stronghold. Dutocq and Cérizet had a powder barrel under the ship, and the slow-

match was always burning; but the wind might blow the match out, and the devil might wet the powder magazine.

The instant when wild beasts are about to seize their prey always seems the most critical, and this moment was now at hand for these hungry tigers. Cérizet said more than once to Théodose by that revolutionary look which two sovereigns have seen within this century: "I made you King and still I am nobody. Not to be everything is to be nothing."

In Cérizet a reaction of envy was gathering impetus like an avalanche. Dutocq saw himself at the mercy of his copying clerk, who had made money. Théodose only wished he could burn his two partners and their papers in two conflagrations. And they all three took too much pains to conceal their own thoughts not to guess the mind of the others.

Théodose lived between three hells as he thought of the chances of the cards, of how to play to his game, and of the future before him. His speech to Thuillier had been the utterance of despair; he had cast the lead into the depths of the old citizen's waters, and had found only twenty-five thousand francs at the bottom.

"And possibly nothing by the end of the month!" said he to himself, as he went to his own rooms.

He felt intense hatred of the Thuilliers. But he held Thuillier by a harpoon that had entered into his deepest conceit, the scheme, namely, for a work called *De l'Impôt et de l'Amortissement* (on taxation and the redemption of the debt), in which he was to co-ordinate the ideas published by a Saint-Simonian paper, the *Globe*, lending them his own Southern color, and giving them a systematic shape. Thuillier's knowledge of raw materials would be of great service to Théodose. On this rope he took his seat, determined to do battle, from this slender basis, with a fool's vanity. This may be of granite or of sand; it depends on the man. But, on reflection, he was glad he had spoken.

"When he sees me secure his fortune by paying over the fifteen thousand francs at a moment when I am so much in need of money, he will look upon me as the god of honesty."

Now this was what Claparon and Cérizet had done with the notary two days before that on which the time should expire allowed for raising the offer for the house. Cérizet, to whom Claparon gave the password and the notary's secret address, went to him and said:

"One of my friends—Claparon, whom you know—begged me to call on you; he expects you the day after to-morrow, in the evening, at the place you know of. He has the paper you want of him, and you shall have it for the ten thousand francs, but I must be present at the delivery of the money, for five thousand francs of it are due to me—and I warn you, my dear sir, that the name on the secret agreement is left blank."

"I will be there," said the notary.

The poor wretch spent the night in such torment as may be imagined, for salvation or ruin hung in the scales for him. But at sunrise, instead of Claparon he saw a policeman in the uniform of the Chamber of Commerce, bearing a judgment in due form and requiring him to come away to Clichy.

Cérizet had come to an understanding with one of the hapless notary's creditors, and had promised to get him arrested in consideration of half the sum owed. Thus the victim of this piece of treachery was compelled to pay, on the nail, six thousand francs out of the ten thousand promised to Claparon, in order to avoid imprisonment; this was the whole amount of the debt.

As he netted his share of this swindle:

"These thousand crowns," said Cérizet, "will enable me to get rid of Claparon."

Cérizet went back to the notary and said to him:

"Claparon is a rogue, monsieur! He has taken fifteen thousand francs from the purchaser, who will certainly remain the owner. Threaten him with telling his creditors where he is hidden and with an indictment for fraudulent bankruptcy; he will give you half readily enough."

The notary, in a fury, wrote a fulminating letter to Claparon. Claparon, in his turn, dreaded an arrest, and Cérizet undertook to get him a passport.

"You have played me many a trick, Claparon," said Cérizet; "but listen: you shall pronounce judgment on me—I have a thousand crowns and not another penny in the world. I will give them to you. Sail for America and there found your fortune as I am making mine here."

That evening, Claparon, disguised by Cérizet as an old woman, set out in the diligence for le Havre. Cérizet was now master of the fifteen thousand francs demanded by Claparon, and he awaited la Peyrade calmly and without haste. This man, of really remarkable intelligence, had a bidder who, under the name of a creditor, for two thousand francs, was to make a bid, but not soon enough to save the sale. This was an idea of Dutocq's which he proceeded to put into execution. Fifteen thousand francs more must be insisted on to bribe this new bidder; consequently he would get seven thousand five hundred more; and he needed it to settle an affair absolutely similar to that of Thuillier, pointed out to him by Claparon, who was stupefied by disaster. The matter in question was a house in the Rue Geoffroy-Marie, which was to be sold for sixty thousand francs. The Widow Poiret offered him ten thousand francs, the wine-merchant did the same, and bills for ten thousand more. These thirty thousand francs and what he was to get, added to six thousand that he had of his own, allowed him to tempt fortune with all the more reason because the twenty-five thousand due from la Peyrade seemed a certainty.

"The time is up," thought Théodose, as he went to ask Dutocq to send Cérizet to see him, "suppose I try to shake off my leech."

"You can only settle this business in Cérizet's office, since Claparon is in it," said Dutocq.

So between seven and eight o'clock Théodose made his appearance in the usurer's den, Dutocq having announced in the morning that the man of capital intended to call.

La Peyrade was ushered into the hideous kitchen where misery was made into mince-meat, and where the tortures were concocted of which we have had a glimpse. The two

men walked up and down the room exactly like beasts in a cage while playing this scene.

"Have you brought the fifteen thousand francs?"

"No, but I have them at home."

"Why not in your pocket?" said Cérizet with asperity.

"That I will tell you," replied the lawyer, who between the Rue Saint-Dominique and l'Estrapade had decided on his line of conduct.

The Provençal, while turning on the gridiron on which his partners had stretched him, had a bright idea that flashed from the heart of the hot coals. Danger has its moments of illumination. He would trust to the power of truthfulness, which can move any man, even a scoundrel. A duelist is almost always favorably disposed towards an adversary who strips to the waist.

"Hm!" said Cérizet. "Now the fun begins!"

The words were sinister, and spoken through his nose with an ominous accent.

"You have placed me in a splendid position, and I will never forget it, my good friend," said Théodose, with deep feeling.

"Oh! If that's all!" said Cérizet.

"Listen to me. You do not know what my intentions are."

"Indeed I do!" replied the usurer.

"No."

"You do not intend to pay up those fifteen thousand——"

Théodose, with a shrug, looked hard at Cérizet, who, startled by his expression, stopped short.

"Would you stand in my place, knowing that you were within range of a gun loaded with grape-shot, without wanting to put an end to the situation? Now, just listen to me. Your business is very risky, and it would be a good thing for you to have a trustworthy protector at the headquarters of justice in Paris. I, by going steadily on my way, may, in three years, be public prosecutor, or even advocate-general. Now and here, I offer you an unfailing friendship which will

certainly serve your turn if only to recover a respectable position later. These are my conditions——"

"Conditions!" exclaimed Cérizet.

"Within ten minutes I will bring you twenty-five thousand francs, in exchange for all the claims you hold against me."

"And Dutocq, and Claparon?" cried Cérizet.

"Leave them in the lurch," whispered Théodose, in his friend's ear.

"That is a neat trick!" retorted Cérizet. "And you have invented this little thimble-rig since you had fifteen thousand francs in your palm which don't belong to you!"

"I have added ten thousand. And, after all, we know each other."

"If you can get ten thousand francs out of your old buffers," exclaimed Cérizet eagerly, "you can extract fifteen. Thirty thousand and I'm your man. If you are frank, so am I."

"You ask for the impossible!" exclaimed Théodose. "At this moment, if you had a Claparon to deal with, your fifteen thousand francs would be gone, for the house belongs to Thuillier."

"I will go and tell him," replied Cérizet, pretending to go and consult Claparon upstairs in the room whence Claparon had departed, packed into a hackney cab, ten minutes before Théodose came.

The antagonists had, as may be supposed, talked in undertones, and if Théodose raised his voice, Cérizet conveyed to him by a gesture that Claparon might be listening. The five minutes during which la Peyrade heard a hum of two voices, as he believed, were agonizing, for his whole life was at stake.

Cérizet presently came down, a smile on his lips, his eyes sparkling with infernal malice, tremulous with glee, terrific in a cheerful mood.

"I know nothing myself," said he, shrugging his shoulders, "but Claparon has friends; he has been working for bankers of the upper class, and he went into fits of laughter, saying, 'Just what I expected!'—You will have to bring me those

twenty-five thousand francs you offered me, and to redeem your bills all the same, my boy."

"And why?" asked Théodose, feeling his spinal marrow turn fluid, as if melted by the discharge of some internal electric shock.

"The house is ours!"

"How is that?"

"Claparon bid a higher price in the name of the first man who proceeded against him, a little toad named Sauvaignou. Desroches, the attorney, has the matter in hand, and you will have formal notice to-morrow morning. It is such a capital job that it is worth our while—Claparon's, Dutocq's, and mine—to find the cash. Where should I be without Claparon? And I have forgiven him. I forgive him, and though you may hardly believe me, my dear fellow, we have kissed and made friends. You must modify your conditions."

The last words were appalling, especially as emphasized by Cérizet's countenance; he was allowing himself the pleasure of playing a scene out of *Le Légataire,* while studying the Provençal character.

"Oh! Cérizet," cried Théodose, "and I meant so well by you!"

"You see, my dear boy," replied Cérizet, "between you and me, this is what is wanted!" And he struck his heart. "You have none. As soon as you fancy you have a hold over us you try to squeeze us flat. I rescued you from the horrors of vermin and starvation, but you will die like a fool. We brought you face to face with fortune; we slipped you into the handsomest society-skin; we put you where you had only to help yourself—and after all that! Now I know you. We march under arms."

"This is war!" said Théodose.

"You fired first," said Cérizet.

"But if you do for me, good-bye to all your hopes; and even if you let me alone, you make me your enemy."

"That is what I said yesterday to Dutocq," said Cérizet coolly. "But what can I do? We will choose between the

two alternatives, and act according to circumstances. I am a good sort," he went on, after a pause; "bring me that twenty-five thousand francs to-morrow morning at nine o'clock, and Thuillier shall keep the house. We will still do our best for you, at both ends, and you must pay. . . . Now, after what has passed, my boy, is not that very handsome treatment?"

And Cérizet slapped him on the shoulder with a sort of cynicism that was a worse brand than that of the executioner's iron.

"Well, give me till midday," said the Provençal, "for there will be a tough pull, as you say."

"I will try to persuade Claparon, but he is a man in a hurry."

"Well, then, till to-morrow," said Théodose, in a tone of determination.

"Good-night, my friend," said Cérizet, in a nasal tone, which degraded the noblest word in the language. "There is a fellow who has powers of suction!" said he to himself, as he watched Théodose walking down the street with the uncertain gait of a bewildered man.

When Théodose turned into the Rue des Postes, he went at a swift pace to the Collevilles' house, working himself up by talking aloud. And under the heat of his seething passions, the sort of interior fire that is known to many Parisians—for such hideous situations are common enough in Paris—he rose to a pitch of frenzy and rhetoric which one word will depict. At the corner of the Rue Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas, in the Rue des Deux Eglises, he cried aloud:

"I will kill him!"

"There is a man who is not best pleased!" observed a workman, whose ironical comment served to quench the incandescent madness that was coming upon Théodose.

As he left Cérizet, the idea had occurred to him of confiding in Flavie, and confessing everything to her. This is the way with Southern natures; strong up to the verge of certain passions which overbalance them.

He went in. Flavie was alone in her room; when she saw Théodose she thought he had come to possess her or to kill her.

"What is the matter?" she cried.

"The matter!—Do you love me, Flavie?"

"Can you doubt it?"

"Wholly, positively—even as a criminal."

"Has he murdered somebody?" thought she. She answered with a nod.

La Peyrade, thankful to clutch at that willow-bough, crossed from his chair to the sofa, and two streams of tears flowed from his eyes, with sobs that would have touched the heart of an old judge.

"Not at home to anybody!" Flavie called out to the maid.

She shut the doors and came back to Théodose, feeling herself moved to the most maternal pity. She found the son of the South stretched at full length, with his head thrown back, and crying bitterly. He had taken out his handkerchief, and when Flavie tried to take it from him it was soaked in tears.

"But what is it? What is the matter?" she asked.

Nature, keener far than art, served Théodose well; he was not playing a part now; he was himself; these tears, this hysterical weeping, were the signature to the farce he had been acting.

"You are a baby!" said she in soft tones, as she stroked Théodose's hair, and his eyes grew dry.

"You are to me the only creature in the world!" cried he, kissing Flavie's hands with a sort of frenzy, "and if you are true to me—if you are to me as the body is to the soul—nay, as the soul is to the body," he added, correcting himself with much grace, "then, then, I can have courage."

He rose and paced the room.

"Yes, then I can fight; I can recover my strength, like Antæus, by embracing my mother. And I will throttle in my grasp the serpents that entwine me, that give me serpents' kisses, that slaver my cheeks, and thirst to suck my blood—my honor! Oh! What a thing is poverty! How great are

the men who can stand and face it with a proud mien! I should have done better to let myself die of hunger on my camp-bed three years and a half ago. The grave is a couch of ease as compared with the life I lead. For eighteen months I have been crammed with respectable citizens, and just as I had a chance of an honest and happy existence, of a splendid future—just as I was stepping forward to take a seat at the table of the world's banquet, the executioner must tap me on the shoulder. Yes! the ruffian taps me on the shoulder and says, 'Pay your tithe to the devil, or die!' And am I not to trample on them, not to ram my fist down their throats to their very bowels! But I will, oh, yes, I will! You see, Flavie, my eyes are dry. Oh, I can laugh, now; I feel my power, and I have recovered my strength. Tell me that you love me; tell me again. The words at this moment are like the word 'Pardon' to a criminal."

"You are terrible, my dear!" said Flavie, "oh, you are crushing me!"

She could not understand, but she sank onto the sofa, half dead and overset by this scene. Théodose fell on his knees before her.

"Forgive me, forgive me," he cried.

"But what is it all about?" said she.

"They are bent on ruining me. Oh! promise me that I shall marry Céleste, and you will see what a happy life you shall share. If you hesitate—well, that will mean that *you* shall be mine—I will have you!"

And he started forward with such vehemence that Flavie was terrified, and began to walk about.

"Ah, my angel! At your feet—there—a miracle! God is certainly on my side; I had, as it were, a lightning flash! A sudden idea came to me! Thanks, thanks, my good angel, great Theodosius! Thou hast saved me!"

Flavie admired this chameleon creature; kneeling on one knee, his hands crossed on his breast, and his eyes raised to heaven in religious rapture, he repeated a prayer; he was the most fervent Catholic; he crossed himself. It was as glorious as the ecstasy of Saint Jerome.

"Good-bye," said he, with a tone of melancholy that was fascinating.

"Oh!" cried Flavie, "leave me that handkerchief."

Théodose ran downstairs, like a lunatic, into the street, and away to the Thuilliers'; but he looked round, saw Flavie at her window, and waved his hand in triumph.

"What a man!" said she to herself.

"My dear fellow," said Théodose to Thuillier, in a calm, soothing, almost coaxing voice, "we are in the power of atrocious villains, but I am going to give them a little lesson."

"What is wrong?" said Brigitte.

"Why, they want twenty-five thousand francs, and to get the law on their side, the notary, or his accomplices, have outbid us. Put five thousand francs in your pocket, Thuillier, and come with me; I will secure the house for you. I am making myself mortal enemies!" he exclaimed. "They will be the death of me, morally speaking. So long as you despise their vile calumnies, and never change to me, that is all I ask. And what is it, after all, but this? If I succeed, you will have paid a hundred and twenty-five thousand francs for the house instead of a hundred and twenty."

"And it will not begin again?" asked Brigitte, very uneasily; her eyes were dilated with horrible suspicion.

"Only the creditors on the schedule have a right to raise the price, and as this one only has exercised it, we are safe. His claim is for no more than two thousand francs, but in a business of this sort the attorneys have to be paid, and it is as well to make the creditor a present of a thousand francs."

"Go, Thuillier, and get your hat and gloves," said Brigitte; "you will find the money, you know where."

"As I have let fifteen thousand francs slip through my fingers for nothing, I will have no more money pass through my hands. Thuillier himself shall pay it," said Théodose, when he found himself alone with Brigitte. "You have saved at least twenty thousand francs over the bargain I made for you with Grindot. He thought he was working for the notary, and you have got a freehold house which, in five years,

will be worth near on a million francs. It is at the corner of a boulevard."

Brigitte listened, but with uneasy attention, exactly like a cat that smells mice under the floor. She looked into la Peyrade's eyes, and in spite of her acute penetration she had her doubts.

"What is it, little aunt?"

"Oh! I shall be on tenter hooks till the house is ours."

"You would give twenty thousand francs, now, wouldn't you," said Théodose, "to see Thuillier in undisputed possession? Well, you must remember that I have made twice as much for you."

"Where are we going?" asked Thuillier.

"To call on Godeschal, whom we must employ as our attorney."

"But we refused to let him marry Céleste," exclaimed the old maid.

"That is the very reason I am going to him," replied Théodose. "I have a high opinion of him; he is a man of honor, and he will feel it a fine thing to do you a service."

Godeschal, Derville's successor, had, for more than ten years, been Desroches' managing clerk. Théodose, who knew this, had heard the name spoken in his ear, as it were, by an inner voice, in the midst of his despair, and he saw a chance of placing the weapon, which Cérizet had aimed at him, in Claparon's hands. But first and foremost the advocate wanted to get into Desroches' office, and gain information as to the position of the foe. Godeschal alone, in virtue of the intimacy existing between a master and a head-clerk, could help him in this.

The attorneys of Paris, when they are on such good terms as Godeschal and Desroches were, live in real brotherhood, and the result is a certain facility for arranging any matters that can be arranged. They obtain from each other, turn and turn about, such concessions as are admissible, applying the proverb "One good turn deserves another," which is acted on, in

fact, in every profession, among ministers, officers, lawyers, and merchants, everywhere, indeed, where hostility has not raised too strong a barrier between the parties concerned.

"I am getting fairly good pay on this transaction," is an argument which need not be spoken; it is expressed in a gesture, a tone, a look. And as attorneys can always meet on this common ground, the matter is arranged. The counterpoise to this good-fellowship lies in what may be called the professional conscience. For instance, society is bound to believe the physician, who, as a witness in medical law says, "This substance contains arsenic;" no consideration can overcome the professional pride of an actor, the sense of honor of a lawyer, the incorruptibility of a minister. And a Paris attorney says, with no less blunt frankness, "You will never get that done; my client is obstinate," and the adversary replies, "Well, well, we will see."

Now, la Peyrade, a wide-awake person, had dragged his gown about the courts long enough to know that legal amenities would serve his purpose.

"Wait in the carriage," said he to Thuillier, when they arrived in the Rue Vivienne, where Godeschal was now master of the office where he had served his apprenticeship. "You need not come up unless he undertakes the job."

It was eleven o'clock at night, and la Peyrade was not disappointed in his expectation of finding a newly fledged attorney busy in his office even so late as this.

"To what do I owe a visit from you, Monsieur l'Avocat?" said Godeschal rising to meet la Peyrade.

Foreigners and country folks, and even people of fashion, may perhaps not know that advocates—or barristers—are to attorneys what generals are to marshals; there is a line of demarcation very strictly observed between the two classes of lawyers in Paris. However old an attorney may be, however competent, he must wait on the advocate. The attorney is the tactician who traces the plan of battle, collects the munitions of war, and sets everything in motion; the advocate does the fighting. It is no more ascertainable why the law

gives a client two men instead of one, than why an author needs a printer and a bookseller. The Association of Advocates forbids the members to do any legal act which is essentially the right or duty of the attorney. Very rarely does any great pleader set foot in an office; they meet in court. Still, in society, these barriers do not exist, and occasionally an advocate, especially in la Peyrade's position, condescends so far as to call on an attorney; but the cases are exceptional, and generally justified by some special urgency.

"Well, to tell the truth, the matter is serious, and a very delicate question must be settled by you and me. Thuillier is down stairs in a coach, and I have come to you not as a pleader, but as Thuillier's friend. You, and you alone, are able to do him an immense service, and I told him you had too noble a soul—for you are the worthy successor of Derville—not to place all your abilities at his command. This is the state of affairs."

After setting forth, altogether to his own advantage, the trick he wished to balk by skill—for attorneys meet with more clients who tell lies than who tell the truth—la Peyrade proceeded to his plan of campaign.

"You, my dear Maître, must go this very evening to see Desroches, explain to him the whole plot, persuade him to see his client Sauvaignou to-morrow morning; among us we will extract the truth from him, and if he wants a thousand francs over and above what is due to him, we will fork out, to say nothing of five hundred to you and as much to Desroches, if Thuillier has a letter renouncing his bid before ten o'clock to-morrow morning. What can Sauvaignou want but his money? Well, then, he is not likely to resist the bait of a thousand-franc note, even if he is but the stalking-horse of some avaricious speculator. The conflict between those who are making use of him does not concern us. Come, get the Thuilliers out of this scrape."

"I will be off to Desroches this instant," said Godeschal.

"No; not before Thuillier has given you a power of attorney, and paid you five thousand francs. In any case, cash in hand is essential."

After an interview at which Thuillier was present, la Peyrade took Godeschal in the carriage to Desroches' office in the Rue de Béthisy, saying that they must go that way to the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, and on Desroches' doorstep la Peyrade fixed for their next meeting at seven next morning. La Peyrade's future life and fortune depended on the upshot of this meeting; so we need not be astonished to find him overlooking the customs of his brotherhood by coming to Desroches' office in order to study Sauvaignou, and to mingle in the fray in spite of the danger he ran in venturing under the eye of the most formidable of Paris attorneys.

As he went in and made his bow he examined Sauvaignou. He was, as Théodose had supposed from his name, a Marseillese, a superior workman, who filled the place of foreman or clerk of the works, intermediary between the master carpenter of the building and the workmen, and superintendent of the execution of the work. The profit of the contractor consists of the difference between the price fixed by the foreman and the price paid by the builder after deducting the cost of materials, in regard only to the labor.

The master carpenter having been made bankrupt, Sauvaignou had entered his name under a judgment of the Tribunal of Commerce as a creditor with a claim on the unfinished building, and had registered his claim. This little business was the end of the general collapse. Sauvaignou, a small, square man, wearing a gray drill blouse and a cap on his head, was seated in an armchair. Three banknotes for a thousand francs each, lying before him on Desroches' table showed la Peyrade that the skirmish was over, and that the attorneys had failed. Godeschal's eyes were indeed eloquent, and the look flashed by Desroches on the advocate of the poor was like the stroke of a pick in a grave. Stimulated by danger, the Provençal rose to the occasion; he was grand, he laid his hand on the three notes and folded them up to put them into his pocket.

"Thuillier does not want to deal," said he to Desroches.

"Then we are all agreed," said the terrible attorney.

"Yes. Your client must repay fifty thousand francs spent on the structure under the contract between Thuillier and Grindot. I did not mention that to you yesterday," he added to Godeschal.

"You hear that?" said Desroches to Sauvaignou. "That will lead to a lawsuit that I cannot undertake without a guarantee."

"But, gentlemen," said Sauvaignou, "I cannot say anything till I have seen the worthy man who gave me five hundred francs on account for having signed a power of attorney to him."

"Are you from Marseilles?" said Théodose to Sauvaignou in the dialect of the district.

"Oh, if once he begins talking *patois* it's all up!" said Desroches to Godeschal in a whisper.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Well, my poor boy," Théodose went on, "they only want to ruin you. Do you know what you had better do? Pocket these three thousand francs, and when the other man comes take your foot-rule and give him a thrashing, and tell him he is a rascal, that he was trying to make a cat's-paw of you, that you revoke the power of attorney, and will return him his money when two Sundays come in the middle of the week. And then, with these three thousand francs and whatever you have saved, get off to Marseilles. And if anything goes wrong, come to this gentleman. He will always know where to find me, and I will get you out of the scrape; for not only am I a good Provençal, but I am one of the leading advocates in Paris, and the friend of the poor."

When the workman found support in a fellow-countryman, sanctioning the reasons he had for playing the usurer false, he capitulated, bargaining for three thousand five hundred francs.

The fifteen hundred francs being granted, "Not a bad haul!" said Sauvaignou, "and it's worth it, for he may have me up for breach of contract."

"No. Do not strike the blow till he begins to talk big; then it will be self-defence."

When Desroches had assured him that la Peyrade was an advocate in practice, Sauvaignou signed the deed of renunciation, including a receipt for the costs, interest, and principal of his claims, in duplicate as between Thuillier and himself, each witnessed by their respective attorneys that the discharge might be final.

"We leave you the fifteen hundred francs," said la Peyrade confidentially to Desroches and Godëschal, "on condition of your handing over the discharge to me. I will take Thuillier to sign it before Cardot, his notary; the poor man never closed an eye all night."

"Very well," said Desroches. "And you," said he, as he made Sauvaignou write his name, "may congratulate yourself on having earned fifteen hundred francs with great ease."

"But are they really mine, Master Scrivener?" asked the Provençal uneasily.

"Oh, quite lawfully!" replied Desroches. "Only you must now revoke the powers you placed in the hands of your representative, dated yesterday. Go into my office there—through there."

Desroches explained to his head-clerk what was to be done, and desired one of his pupils to take care that the messenger was at Cérizet's before ten o'clock.

"I am infinitely obliged to you, Desroches," said la Peyrade, pressing the attorney's hand. "You think of everything; I shall not forget this service."

"Do not hand your bid in to Cardot till after twelve o'clock."

"And you, old boy," cried Théodose to Sauvaignou, "take your Poll to Belleville for the day; don't go home, whatever you do."

"I understand," said Sauvaignou, "nabbed to-morrow!"

"I believe you," said la Peyrade, with a peculiar Provençal cry.

"There is something beneath all this," said Desroches to Godeschal, just as the advocate came back into the private room from the office.

"The Thuilliers have secured a fine property for nothing, that's all," said Godeschal.

"La Peyrade and Cérizet are to me just like two divers fighting under water. What am I to say to Cérizet, who sent the job to me?" asked Desroches of the lawyer, after making this keen remark in an undertone.

"That Sauvaignou forced your hand," replied la Peyrade.

"And you are not afraid?" said Desroches, point-blank.

"I!" said Théodose. "I can give him points!"

"I will know all about it to-morrow," said Desroches to Godeschal. "A beaten man will always blab."

La Peyrade went off with his declaration. By eleven o'clock he was in waiting on the magistrate, calm and resolute, and as he saw Cérizet come in pale with rage, his eyes glistening with venom, he said in his ear:

"My dear fellow, I am good-natured too! I still have the twenty-five thousand francs at your service in exchange for all the bills you hold in my name." Cérizet looked at him, incapable of saying a word; he was green; his bile had risen.

"I am a landowner, in full possession!" exclaimed Thuillier, as he came home from seeing Jacquinot, Cardot's son-in-law and successor. "No human power can deprive me of my house; they have told me so."

Middle-class men believe a notary far rather than an attorney; the notary is closer to them than any other ministerial official. A Paris citizen is not without some alarm when he goes to see his attorney, whose pugnacious daring bewilders him, while he always goes with fresh pleasure to call on the notary, and admires his wisdom and good sense.

"Cardot, who is looking out for a handsome residence, is ready to take a second floor apartment," said he, "and on Sunday, if I like, he will introduce me to a landlord who will take the whole house to sublet, for a lease of eighteen years, at forty thousand francs a year, he to pay the rates and taxes. What do you think, Brigitte?"

"We must wait," replied she. "Ah! our dear Théodose gave me a terrible fright."

"Hallo! My dear. But you do not know that Cardot asked me who had put me in the way of this stroke of business, and said I owed him a present of ten thousand francs, at least. In fact, I owe him everything."

"But he is like our own child," replied Brigitte.

"Poor boy, and to do him justice, he asks for nothing."

"Well, my dear fellow," said la Peyrade, coming in from court at about three o'clock, "so here you are, immensely rich!"

"And by your act, my dear Théodose."

"And you, little aunt; are you alive again? You were not half so frightened as I was. I take more care for your interests than for my own. I did not breathe freely till eleven o'clock this morning; and now I am certain I have two mortal foes at my heels in the two men I have thrown over for you. As I came home I could not help wondering what the influence was that you have over me to make me commit this kind of crime, and whether the happiness of being one of your family, of becoming your son, can wipe out the stain I feel on my conscience."

"Pooh, you will get rid of it at confession," said Thuillier, the free-thinker.

"Now," Théodose went on to Brigitte, "you can pay the price of the property in perfect security, eighty thousand francs, and thirty thousand to Grindot; a hundred and twenty thousand francs in all; with your share of the costs, these last twenty thousand make it up to a hundred and forty thousand. If you let the house to a tenant for subletting, make him pay a year's rent in advance, and reserve the first floor above the entresol for my wife and me. Even then you can get forty thousand francs a year, for twelve years. If you should wish to leave this neighborhood and live nearer to the Chamber, you will have ample room to live with us in that spacious first floor, reserving the coach-house and stables and everything needed for a handsome style of living. And now, Thuillier, I mean to get you the Cross of the Legion of Honor."

At this last flash of hope Brigitte exclaimed:

"On my word, boy, you have managed our business so well, that I leave it to you to conclude the bargain for the house."

"Do not abdicate, my lady aunt," said Théodose. "And God preserve me from ever taking a step without you! You are the good genius of the family. I am thinking only of the day when Thuillier sits in the Chamber. You will have forty thousand francs in hand within the next two months; and that will not hinder Thuillier from getting his ten thousand francs at the end of the first quarter."

Having given the old maid this hope, and leaving her jubilant, he led Thuillier into the garden, and without beating about the bush, he said:

"My dear fellow, find some excuse for asking your sister to give you ten thousand francs, and never let her suspect that they pass into my hands. Tell her the money is insisted on in the office to enable you to be made *chevalier* of the Legion of Honor, and that you know to whom to give it."

"That will do," said Thuillier. "Besides, I can repay her out of the rent."

"Get the cash by this evening, my good fellow; I am going out to see about the Cross, and to-morrow we shall know where we are."

"What a man you are!" cried Thuillier.

"The Ministry will not stand much longer, we must get this out of them!" said Théodose shrewdly.

La Peyrade hastened off to see Madame Colleville, and said, as he went in:

"I have won! We shall have secured a property worth a million francs for Céleste; Thuillier will settle it on her in reversion, by her marriage contract. But we must keep the secret, or Céleste will have peers of France paying court to her. And the settlements will have to include me. Now dress, and come with me to call on the Comtesse du Bruel; she can get the Cross for Thuillier. While you are putting on your war-paint, I will go and say something pretty to Céleste; you and I can chat in the carriage."

La Peyrade had caught sight of Céleste and Félix Phellion in the drawing-room; Flavie had such perfect confidence in her daughter that she had left her with the young professor.

Since the grand triumph he had won that morning, Théodose felt the necessity of paying his first addresses to Céleste. The moment for getting up a quarrel between these two had come; he did not hesitate to put his ear to the drawing-room door, before going in, to hear what little of the word love they had by this time come to, and he was really invited, so to speak, to commit this domestic breach of faith by certain tones of voice which led him to conclude that they were quarreling. Love, says one of our poets, is the privilege in which two beings indulge of causing each other a great deal of grief over nothing at all.

Having, once for all, made Félix the choice of her heart as her companion for life, Céleste felt less desire to study his character than to become united to him by that communion of soul which is the foundation of all true affection, and which in young minds means an involuntary cross-questioning. The dispute which Théodose was fated to overhear had its origin in a difference of opinion which had simmered for some days between the mathematician and Céleste.

The girl, the outcome, morally, of the period when Madame Colleville was endeavoring to repent of her sins, was immovably pious; she was of the true flock of the faithful, and in her unflinching Catholicism, tempered by the mysticism which appeals to youthful souls, was the poetry of her heart, the life within her life. From this stage girls go on to be saints or very frivolous women. But during that phase of their youth they have in their souls a touch of dogmatism, the ideal of perfection is always before the eye of their fancy, for them everything must be celestial, angelic, or divine. Nothing outside that ideal can be allowed to exist; everything else is mud and filth. And this idea often leads to the rejection of a flawed diamond by a girl, who, as a woman, will worship paste.

Now Céleste had discerned that in matters of faith Félix

was not irreligious but indifferent. Like most geometricians, mathematicians, chemists, and great naturalists, he had subjected religion to argument, and had found it a problem as insoluble as the squaring of the circle. A deist at heart, he still professed the religion of most Frenchmen without attaching any more importance to it than to the laws of last July. There must be a God in heaven as there must be the bust of a King at the Mairie.

Félix Phellion, the worthy son of his father, had not attempted to conceal his mind; he allowed Céleste to read it with the frankness and simplicity of an inquirer; and the girl confused the religious and the practical questions; she had a deeply seated horror of atheism, and her confessor had told her that a deist is first cousin to an atheist.

"Have you remembered, Félix, to do what you promised me?" asked Céleste as soon as her mother had left the room.

"No, my dear Céleste," replied Félix.

"Oh! can you break a promise!" said she gently.

"It would be profanation," said Félix. "I love you so much, and my love makes me so weak to your wishes, that I promise a thing against my conscience Conscience, Céleste, is our greatest treasure, our strength, our support. How could you wish me to go into a church to kneel before a priest who is to me no more than a man? You would have despised me if I had obeyed you."

"And so, my dear Félix, you will not go to church?" said Céleste, with a tearful glance at her lover. "If I were your wife, you would leave me to go alone?—you do not love me as I love you!—for till this moment I have cherished in my heart a feeling for an atheist antagonistic to what God would have in me."

"An atheist!" cried Félix, "no, no! Listen, Céleste. There is a God, no question; I believe in Him, but I have a loftier idea of Him than your priests have. I do not lower Him to my level. I try to rise to His. I listen to the voice He has placed within me which honest men call their conscience, and I try not to darken the rays of divine light that come to me.

Never will I do anybody an injury, never will I sin against the law of universal morality which was that of Confucius, of Moses, of Pythagoras, of Socrates, and of Jesus Christ. I dwell in the presence of God; my actions are my prayers. I will never lie, my word is sacred, I will never do anything base or vile. These are the tenets I derive from my excellent father, and these I will bequeath to my children. I will do all the good I can in the world even if I should suffer for it. What more can you ask of a man?"

Céleste shook her head mournfully over this profession of faith.

"Read the *Imitation of Christ,*" said she, "and read it attentively. Try to be converted to the Holy Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church, and you will understand how foolish your words are. Listen, Félix. According to the Church, marriage is not the affair of a day, the satisfaction of desire; it is a bond for eternity. What, are we to live united by day and night, and be one flesh, one spirit, and can we have in our hearts two languages, two religions, a perpetual ground of dissensions? Would you condemn me to weeping in secret over the state of your soul; could I appeal to God if I constantly beheld His right hand armed to punish you? Your deistic blood, your convictions, might dwell in my children! Oh, Heaven, how many sorrows for a wife! No, the idea is intolerable. O Félix, be of my faith, for I can never be of yours. Do not set a yawning gulf between us. If you loved me, by this time you would have read the *Imitation of Christ.*"

The Phellions, sons of the *Constitutionnel,* had no love of priests. Félix was so rash as to answer this sort of supplication uttered by a yearning soul.

"You are repeating a lesson taught you by your confessor, Céleste." said he, "and nothing is more fatal to happiness than the intervention of priests in domestic matters——"

"Oh!" cried Céleste, indignantly, for love alone had made her speak, "you do not love me. The voice of my heart is not heard in yours. You have not understood me because you

have not apprehended my meaning, and I forgive you, for you know not what you say."

She wrapped herself in proud silence, and Félix went to the window, where he sat drumming with his fingers on the glass, a sort of music very familiar to those who lose themselves in bitter reflections. Félix, in fact, was putting these curious but crucial questions to his Phellion conscience:

"Céleste is a wealthy heiress, and if I yield to her views in opposition to the voice of natural religion, it would be that I might make an advantageous marriage, which is a base action. As a father of a family I could not allow priests to have the smallest influence in my home; if I give way now, I shall be guilty of an act of weakness that would lead to many more, equally fatal to the authority of a husband and father. All this is unworthy of a philosopher."

He went back to his beloved Céleste.

"Céleste," said he, "on my knees I implore you not to confuse things which the law in its wisdom has divided. We live for two worlds, that of society and that of Heaven. Each one must go his own way to work out his salvation; but as to social life, is not the observance of its law obedience to God? Christ said, 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.' Cæsar is the political world.—Now, let us forget this little quarrel."

"A little quarrel!" exclaimed the enthusiast. "I desire that you should have my heart, whole, as I would have yours, and you divide it into two parts! Is not this dreadful? You forget that marriage is a sacrament."

"Your priests have turned your brain!" cried the mathematician, out of all patience.

"Monsieur Phellion," said Céleste, hastily interrupting him, "enough of this subject."

It was at this moment that Théodose thought it necessary to intervene; he found Céleste pale and the young professor uneasy, as a lover must be who has just vexed his mistress.

"I heard the word *enough*—has there been too much?" he asked, looking at Céleste and Félix by turns.

"We were speaking of religion," replied Félix, "and I was

explaining to mademoiselle how fatal clerical influence must be to the privacy of home——"

"That was not the point, monsieur," cried Céleste, with asperity. "The question is, can a husband and wife make but one heart when one is an atheist and the other a Catholic?"

"Are there any atheists?" cried Théodose, with an expression of the deepest amazement. "Can a Catholic marry a Protestant? No salvation is possible for a couple excepting in absolute conformity on all points of religious opinion. I, to be sure, I am a native of the *Comtat,* and of a family which once gave a pope to Rome, for our coat-of-arms is *gules,* a key *argent* with a friar carrying a church, and a pilgrim holding a staff *or,* and the motto, *'J'ouvre et je ferme'*—and I, I say, am fiercely immovable on the subject. However, in these days, thanks to the modern system of education, such discussions are not thought extraordinary! I, as I say, would not marry a Protestant even if she had millions—not even if I went mad for love of her! Faith admits of no discussion; *Una fides, unus Dominus*—that is my motto in politics."

"You hear!" cried Céleste triumphantly, as she turned to Félix.

"I am no bigot," la Peyrade went on. "I go to mass at six in the morning when no one sees me; I fast on Friday; in short, I am a son of the Church, and I would never begin any serious undertaking without preliminary prayer, after the manner of our forefathers. No one sees anything of my religion. During the Revolution of 1789 an incident occurred in my family which attached us all more closely than ever to our holy Mother Church. There was a poor Demoiselle de la Peyrade, of the senior branch, the owners of the little estate of la Peyrade—for we are la Peyrade des Canquoëlles, though the two branches inherit reciprocally. This young lady had married, six years before the Revolution, a lawyer who, in the fashion of the time, was a Voltairean, that is to say, an unbeliever; or, if you choose, a deist. He took up revolutionary notions and went in for those pleasing rites of which you have heard, in honor of the goddess Reason. He came back to

our part of the world soaked to fanaticism in the Convention. His wife was extremely handsome; he compelled her to play the part of Liberty. The unfortunate woman went mad—she died mad. Well, and in the present state of things we may very well see another 1793."

This romance, invented on the spur of the moment, made so deep an impression on Céleste's fresh and innocent imagination that she rose and, bowing to the two young men, went to her room.

"Monsieur! what have you said!" cried Félix, stricken to the heart by the cold glance which Céleste bestowed on him with an affectation of utter indifference. "She fancies herself figuring already as the goddess Reason."

"What, then, was the subject in dispute?"

"My indifference on religious matters,"

"The curse of our age!" replied Théodose, with solemnity.

"Here I am," said Madame Colleville, appearing, very handsomely dressed. "But what is the matter with my poor child? She is crying——"

"Crying, madame?" exclaimed Félix. "Tell her, pray, that I will forthwith study the *Imitation of Christ*."

And Félix went downstairs with Théodose and Flavie, the lawyer pressing her arm significantly to make her understand that he would explain to her in the carriage what had so greatly agitated the young professor.

An hour later, Madame Colleville, with Céleste, Colleville, and Théodose, went in to dine with the Thuilliers. Théodose and Flavie led Thuillier into the garden, where Théodose said, "My dear fellow, you will have the Cross within a week. Here, this sweet friend will tell you all about our visit to Madame la Comtesse du Bruel——"

And Théodose left them together on seeing Desroches approaching in the wake of Mademoiselle Thuillier. A fearful and chilling presentiment led him to go forward to meet the attorney.

"My dear sir," said Desroches in la Peyrade's ear, "I have

come to see whether you can command twenty-five thousand francs, and two thousand six hundred and eighty francs, sixty centimes, for costs."

"Then you are acting for Cérizet?" cried the advocate.

"He has handed the papers over to Louchard, so you know what awaits you after arrest. Now, is Cérizet wrong in supposing you to have twenty-five thousand francs in your desk? You offered them to him, and to him it seems only natural that you should not keep them locked up——"

"I am much obliged for your kind intent," said Théodose, "but, my dear sir, I foresaw this move."

"Between you and me," said the attorney, "you tricked him handsomely. The old rogue will go any lengths for revenge, for if you cast your gown to the sharks and go to prison he will lose every penny."

"I!" cried Théodose. "Oh, I will pay. But there are five more bills out each for five thousand francs; what does he mean to do with them?"

"Well, after this morning's business, I cannot say; but my client is a cunning dog and a mangy one; he has his little plans, no doubt."

"Come, now, Desroches," said Théodose, taking the lean, unbending attorney by the waist, "are the papers still in your hands?"

"Do you mean to pay?"

"Yes; give me three hours."

"Very good. Be at my place at nine o'clock. I will take your cash and give you the bills; but by half-past nine Louchard has them——"

"All right—to-night at nine," said Théodose.

"At nine," replied Desroches, whose eye had taken in the whole family then assembled in the garden.

Céleste, with reddened eyes, was chatting with her godmother. Colleville and Brigitte, Flavie and Thuillier, were on the steps of the broad, double flight from the garden up to the entrance hall. Said Desroches to Théodose, who had led him back there:

"You can certainly afford to pay your notes of hand."

At a single glance Desroches had understood all that the advocate had taken in hand.

On the following morning, at break of day, Théodose went to the "poor man's banker" to see what effect had been produced on the foe by the payment so punctually made overnight, and to make one more effort to free himself from this gad-fly.

He found Cérizet up and stirring, in colloquy with a woman, and was somewhat imperatively desired to keep his distance so as not to disturb the interview. This left la Peyrade at leisure to conjecture what gave this woman her importance—an importance to which the usurer's anxious expression bore ample testimony. Théodose had a suspicion, though a very vague one, that the purport of this conference would in some way affect Cérizet's intentions, for he could see in the man's countenance the complete change that comes of hope.

"But, my good *Maman* Cardinal——"

"Well, my worthy monsieur——"

"What do you want?"

"You must make up your mind——"

Such beginnings or endings of sentences were the only gleams of light cast on the motionless listener by this eager conversation, carried on as it was lip to ear and ear to lip; and la Peyrade's attention was riveted on Madame Cardinal.

Madame Cardinal was one of Cérizet's chief customers. She was a costermonger trading in fish. Though Parisians may be familiar with this class of beings peculiar to their soil, foreigners never suspect their existence; and technically speaking, Madame Cardinal was worthy of the interest she had aroused in the lawyer. So many women of the type are to be seen in the streets that the ordinary foot-passenger pays no more heed to them than to the three thousand pictures in an exhibition. But here, in these surroundings, Madame Cardinal had all the importance of an isolated masterpiece, for she was a perfect example of her kind.

She stood high in muddy wooden shoes; but her feet, besides being carefully wrapped in sock-linings, were also clad in stout, wrinkled stockings. Her print gown, heavy with a flounce of mud, showed the wear of the strap which supports the saleswoman's basket, cutting across the back rather below the waist. Her principal wrap was a shawl of rabbit-wool, so called, and the two ends were tied in a knot above her bustle, for this word alone can describe the effect produced by the strap across her skirts, bunching them up in a roll. A coarse knit, tied round her neck as a scarf, showed a red throat, crossed with wrinkles, like the ice on the pool of la Villette after skating. On her head she wore a yellow bandana twisted into a not unpicturesque turban.

Short and burly, with a fine high color, Madame Cardinal no doubt relished her glass of brandy first thing in the morning. She had been handsome. Her "pals" of the market accused her in their vigorous figure of speech of having earned many a day's wages by night. To bring her voice down to the pitch of civil conversation, it had to be stifled and subdued as if she were in a sick-room, and then it came thick and wheezy from a throat accustomed to shout the name of each fish in its season in tones that rang in the highest garret. Her nose *à la Roxalane,* her not ill-shaped mouth, her blue eyes, all that had once been beauty was buried in the rolls of superfluous fat stamped with the traces of a life in the open air. The stomach and bust were of an amplitude to please Rubens.

"And do you want to see me lying on straw?" said she to Cérizet. "What do I care for the Toupilliers? Am I not a Toupillier myself?—And how do you expect me to find these Toupilliers?"

This ferocious outburst was silenced by Cérizet with a long hush-sh such as every conspirator submits to.

"Well, then, go and see what you can do, and come back again," said Cérizet, pushing the woman to the door and saying a few words in her ear.

"Well, my good friend," said Théodose to Cérizet, "you have got your money."

"Yes," replied Cérizet, "we have measured our claws—they are equally sharp, equally long, equally strong—what then?"

"Am I to tell Dutocq that you were paid twenty-five thousand francs last night?"

"Oh, my dear fellow, if you love me, not a word!" cried Cérizet.

"Listen to me," said Théodose. "I must know once for all what you want. I am fully determined not to lie another twenty-four hours on the gridiron where you have put me. You may swindle Dutocq, I do not care a straw; but you and I must come to an understanding. Twenty-five thousand francs is a fortune, for you must have ten thousand francs made in business, and you have enough to be honest upon. Cérizet, if you let me alone, if you do not hinder my becoming Mademoiselle Colleville's husband, I shall rise to be attorney-general in Paris, or something very like it. You cannot do better than secure a friend in such high places."

"These, then, are my terms—not open to discussion; you take 'em or leave 'em: You will secure for me the lease, for eighteen years, of Thuillier's house as principal landlord, to sublet, and I will hand over to you one more of those I. O. U.'s of yours, receipted. I shall stand out of your way, and you must settle with Dutocq for the other four. You have done with me, and Dutocq is no match for you."

"Well, I agree to your terms if you will pay forty-eight thousand francs a year for the house, payable in advance, the lease to date from next October."

"Very good; but I will give only forty-three thousand in cash; your bill will make up the forty-eight. I have seen the house, I have inspected it thoroughly; it is just what I want."

"One thing more," said Théodose. "You will help me to tackle Dutocq."

"No, no!" said Cérizet; "you have done him brown

enough without my helping to bake him any more. You can toast him dry. There is reason in all things. The poor man does not know which way to turn for the last fifteen thousand francs to pay for his place, and it is quite enough for you to know that you can get your bills back for fifteen thousand francs."

"Well, then, give me a fortnight to get you your lease."

"Not a day beyond Monday next! On Tuesday your bill for five thousand francs will be in Louchard's hands, unless you pay on Monday or Thuillier has granted me the lease."

"Well, Monday, then!" said Théodose. "Are we friends?"

"We shall be on Monday," replied Cérizet.

"Very well, till Monday. You will treat me to a dinner?" said Théodose, laughing.

"At the *Rocher de Cancale,* if I have the lease. Dutocq too. We will have a laugh. It is a very long time since I laughed."

Théodose and Cérizet shook hands, saying:

"Till we meet again!"

It was not without reason that Cérizet had been so easily mollified. In the first place, as Desroches would say, "Bile does not help business;" and the usurer had felt the truth of this too deeply not to take stock coolly of the position, and to bleed the crafty Provençal.

"It is fair revenge," said Desroches, "and you have the fellow on the hip. Wring him dry."

Now, in the course of the past ten years, Cérizet had seen several men enriched by the business of subletting houses. The first leaseholder, in Paris, is to the owner what a farmer is to the landed proprietor. All Paris knows how one of the great tailors built a most sumptuous house at his own cost on the famous site of Frascati, paying fifty thousand francs as the rent of this structure, which in nineteen years was to become the property of the ground landlord. Notwithstanding the expense of building—about seven hundred thousand francs—by the end of the nineteen years the profits are very considerable.

Cérizet, on the lookout for a business, had considered the chances of profit to be derived from renting the house which Thuillier had positively *stolen*, as he told Desroches, and he had seen that it could be let out for more than sixty thousand francs within six years' time. It had four shop fronts, two on each side, as it stood at the corner of a boulevard.

Cérizet expected to make ten thousand francs a year, at least, for twelve years, irrespective of incidental profits and premiums on renewals of the shop leases, which he would grant only for six years at a time.

He intended to sell the good-will of his money-lending business to Madame Poiret and Cadenet for ten thousand francs; he had more than thirty thousand in hand, so he was well able to pay the year's rent in advance, which the owner commonly demands from the first lessee as a guarantee. Cérizet had spent a night in bliss; he had slept with happy dreams; he saw himself on the highroad to an honest business, to becoming a respectable citizen like Thuillier, like Minard, like a hundred others. He gave up the idea of purchasing the house that was being built in the Rue Geoffroy-Marie.

But he awoke to luck he little expected; he found fortune standing before him pouring riches on him from her golden horn, in the person of Madame Cardinal.

He had always been on good terms with this woman, and for the last year he had promised her the sum requisite for the purchase of an ass and a small truck, that she might be able to trade on a larger scale, and go out of Paris into the suburbs. Madame Cardinal, the widow of a stalwart market porter, had an only daughter whose beauty had been much praised to Cérizet by other women, his customers. Olympe Cardinal was about thirteen years of age when, in 1837, Cérizet had set up as money-lender, and with a view to the vilest profligacy, he was most accommodating to the mother; he raised her from the depths of misery, hoping to make Olympe his mistress. However, in 1838, the daugh-

ter had run away, and was no doubt "seeing life," to use the expression by which the people describe the abuse of the most precious gifts of nature and of youth.

Now, to seek a girl in Paris is like hunting for a bleak in the Seine—you must take the chance of a haul. Madame Cardinal, having treated a "pal" to the *Théâtre de Bobino,* recognized her daughter in the leading lady, who for three years had been in the power of the leading "comic." The mother, charmed at first to find her progeny in gaudy, tinseled array, her hair dressed like a duchess', with silk lace stockings and satin shoes, applauded her first appearance on the stage; but she presently shouted out from her seat:

"You shall hear of me again, you blight on your mother! I will see whether you rascally play-actors have a right to carry off girls of sixteen!"

She tried to get hold of the girl at the stage door; but the damsel and her comic man had no doubt jumped over the footlights, and gone out with the public, instead of by the side door, where the Widow Cardinal and her ally, Madame Mahoudeau, made an infernal uproar subdued only by two functionaries of the police. These august authorities, before whom the two ladies moderated the pitch of their voices, pointed out to the mother that if her daughter was sixteen, she was of the age to go on the stage, so that instead of shrieking at the stage door for the manager, she could summons the girl before a magistrate or in a criminal court, whichever she preferred.

Next morning Madame Cardinal thought she would consult Cérizet, since he worked under a justice of the peace; but before betaking herself to his den in the Rue des Poules she had been startled by the arrival of the porter from the house where her uncle lived, old Toupillier, who, as the messenger informed her, had but two days to live.

"Well, how can I help that?" replied Madame Cardinal.

"We put our trust in you, my dear Madame Cardinal; you will not forget the good turn we are doing you. This is how things stand. In the last few weeks your uncle has

not been able to stir, and he trusted me to go and collect the rents of his house in Rue Notre-Dame de Nazareth, and the arrears of dividends on a treasury bond he holds for eighteen hundred francs——"

Madame Cardinal's eyes, which had been wandering, suddenly assumed a stare.

"Yes, my beauty," the worthy Perrache went on,—a little hunchback,—"and seeing that you are the only person that ever thought of him and brought him a bit of fish now and then, and came up to see him, perhaps he will remember you in his will. My wife has been nursing him and sitting up with him these last few days; she has mentioned you to him, but he would not let us tell you how bad he was. But you see it is time you should drop in. Why, it is close on two months now since he has been to business."

"You may say, old leather puncher," said she to the porter—a shoemaker by trade—as they walked at a great pace to the Rue Honoré-Chevalier, where her uncle lodged in a squalid garret, "that the hair would be thick in the palm of my hand before it ever entered my head that Uncle Toupillier was a rich man! What, the godly old beggar of Saint-Sulpice!"

"Aye!" said the porter, "and he fed himself comfortably; he took his deary to bed with him o' nights—a fat bottle of Roussillon. My wife knows the taste of it; but he always told us it was but six sous a bottle. He bought it at the wine-shop in the Rue des Canettes."

"Now, no blabbing, my good man," said the widow, as she parted from her informant. "I will remember you—if there is anything."

This man Toupillier, once a drum-major in the Guards, had entered the service of the Church two years before 1789 by becoming the *Suisse* or beadle of the Church of Saint-Sulpice. The Revolution had deprived him of his functions, and he fell into abject poverty. He then took up the business of painters' model, for he was a finely made man.

When the services of the Church were restored, he re-

sumed the beadle's halbert; but in 1816 he was dismissed from office, as much for immoral conduct as for his political opinions; he was supposed to be a Bonapartist. However, by way of pension, he was allowed to stand by the door and offer holy water to the worshipers.

After this, a luckless business, of which more will transpire ere long, deprived him of his sprinkler; still clinging to the church by hook or by crook, he obtained leave to sit outside the church door, a licensed beggar. There, being by this time seventy-two years old, he gave himself out to be ninety-six, and traded as a centenarian.

Nowhere in Paris could you see such hair or such a beard as Toupillier's. He walked bent almost double, holding a stick in a shaking hand, a hand tawny as with the lichen that grows on granite, and he held out the classic hat, greasy, broad-brimmed, and cobbled, into which alms fell freely. His legs, wrapped in linen rags, dragged a pair of wretched hempen shoes comfortably lined with stout horse-hair soles. He made up his face with ingredients that looked like the traces of severe illness and deep wrinkles, and he acted the senility of old age to perfection. After 1830 he was a hundred; in reality his age was eighty years. He was the chief of the beggars, the cock of the walk; and all who came to beg under the church porch, protected there from the persecutions of the police by favor of the Suisse, the verger, the holy-water giver, and the parish church, paid him a sort of tribute money.

When a chief mourner, a bridegroom, or a godfather, as he came out of church, gave a sum of money, saying, "Here, this is for you all; no begging," Toupillier, as representative of the Suisse, pocketed three-quarters of the dole, and gave his acolytes but one-fourth, and their toll was a sou a day. Money and wine were the passions of his later days, but he regulated his indulgence in drink and devoted himself to hoarding, not, however, to the neglect of his personal comfort. He drank only in the evening after the church was closed. For twenty years he went to sleep every night in the arms of intoxication, his last mistress.

By daybreak every morning he was at his post with all his munitions of war. From dawn till dinner—which he ate at Père Lathuile's, made famous by Charlet—he gnawed crusts as his sole food, but with the craft of an actor, and such resignation as brought him abundant alms.

The Suisse and the holy water man, with whom no doubt he had an understanding, used to say of him:

"He is the recognized church-beggar; he knew the Curé Languet, who built Saint-Sulpice; he was Suisse here for twenty years before and after the Revolution; he is a hundred years old."

This little biography, familiar to every worshiper, was the best of advertisements, no hat was better filled in Paris. In 1826 he bought his house, and in 1830 invested in the funds.

Judging from the price of these two securities, he must have been making six thousand francs a year, and have turned them over by money-lending of the same type as Cérizet's, for the house cost forty thousand francs and he invested forty-eight thousand in the funds. His niece, completely deceived, as were the porter's family, the minor church officials, and the charitable souls, believed him poorer than herself; and when her fish was getting high, she would take it to the poor man.

So she now thought herself justified in taking advantage of her liberality and her charity to an uncle who had no doubt a crowd of unknown relations, since she was the third and youngest of the Toupillier daughters; she had four brothers, and her father, a truck-porter, had told her in her young days of three aunts and four uncles of variously luckless fortunes.

After visiting the invalid she returned at a hand-gallop to consult Cérizet, to tell him how she had found her daughter, and the reasons, suppositions, and indications which led her to believe that Uncle Toupillier hid a pile of gold in his wretched mattress. Madame Cardinal quite understood that she was not clever enough unaided to get possession of the

inheritance by either fair or foul means, so she put her trust in Cérizet.

The petty usurer, like a rag-picker in luck, had at length found some diamonds in mire he had been raking for four years in the hope of one of those strokes of chance which occur, it is said, in the heart of these districts whence rich men sometimes emerge in wooden shoes. This was the secret of his civility to the man whose ruin was a sealed doom. His anxiety may be imagined as he awaited Madame Cardinal's return after showing her how she might verify her suspicions as to the existence of the treasure, promising her complete success if only she would leave it to him to harvest the crop. This dark and wily conspirator was not the man to hesitate at a crime, especially if he could commit it by other hands than his own while absorbing the profits. Then he would buy the house in the Rue Geoffroy-Marie, and see himself at last a citizen of Paris, a capitalist in a position to carry on an extensive business.

"My Benjamin," said the costermonger, coming with a purple face, the result alike of greed and of her swift return, "my uncle is lying on more than a hundred thousand francs in gold pieces, and I am positive that the Perraches, under pretence of nursing him, have an eye on the cash."

"That will not be much, divided among forty heirs," said Cérizet. "Listen to me, mother; I will marry your daughter, give her your uncle's gold, and I will give you the income from the house and securities for life."

"And we shall run no risk?"

"None whatever."

"Done!" said Madame Veuve Cardinal, clasping hands with her future son-in-law. "Six thousand francs a year—a jolly life!"

"And me for a son-in-law, into the bargain," added Cérizet.

"Now," said Cérizet, after a pause in which the couple embraced each other, "I must go and inspect the ground. Do not leave this place. Tell the porter you are expecting

a doctor—the doctor, that's me. Pretend you do not know me."

"You are a sharp one, you old rogue!" cried the woman, giving Cérizet a slap on the stomach by way of farewell.

An hour later, Cérizet, dressed in black, disguised in a red wig and an artistically made-up face, arrived at the Rue Honoré-Chevalier in a decent hired vehicle. He asked the shoemaker porter to show him up to the room in which a pauper lodged named Toupillier.

"Then you are the doctor Madame Cardinal is expecting?"

Cérizet no doubt realized the gravity of the part, for he made no reply.

"Is it this way?" he asked, turning to one side of the courtyard.

"No, monsieur," replied the worthy Perrache, leading him to the backstairs up to the garret where the patient lodged.

The inquisitive porter remained at liberty to cross-question the cab-driver, and we will leave him to the occupation of carrying out his investigations.

The house in which Toupillier lived was one of those which are fated to be cut in half by the widening of the street, for the Rue Honoré-Chevalier is one of the narrowest in the neighborhood of Saint-Sulpice. The owner, forbidden by law to raise or to repair the structure, was obliged to sublet the wretched tenement in the state in which he had bought it. It was a hideous building, consisting of one story over the ground floor, with garrets above, and a sort of wing at the back on each side. The courtyard thus formed ended in a garden planted with trees, and let with the first-floor rooms. This plot, divided from the courtyard by a railing, would have enabled a rich owner to sell the house to the municipal authorities to be rebuilt on the whole of the courtyard; but as it was, the whole of the first floor was sublet to a mysterious lodger who held himself aloof, and had evaded all the detective efforts of the porter and the curiosity of the other tenants.

This resident, now seventy years of age, had, in 1829, had a flight of steps thrown out of the end window of one of the wings looking on the garden, so as to be able to go down and walk in it without crossing the courtyard. The left-hand side of the ground floor was occupied by a book-stitcher, who had turned the stables and coach-house into work-rooms ten years since; the other half was rented by a binder. The binder and the stitcher each inhabited half of the garrets to the street. Those on one side of the yard were let, with the first floor, to the mysterious tenant; and Toupillier paid a rent of a hundred francs for the loft over the other little wing to the left, to which there was a staircase dim in borrowed lights. The carriage entrance formed a bay, an indispensable arrangement in a street so narrow that two vehicles could not pass.

Cérizet took the cord that served as a holdfast to climb the sort of ladder that led to the room where the aged beggar lay dying; the room offered the hideous aspect of poverty elaborately shammed.

Now, in Paris everything that is done to an end is done to perfection. The poor are in such matters as clever as shopkeepers are in dressing their windows, or as the falsely rich in getting credit.

The floor had never been swept; the tiles were invisible under a litter of dirt, dust, dried mud, and all the rubbish flung down by Toupillier. A wretched cast-iron stove with a pipe bricked into a closed fireplace was the most conspicuous object in this den. There was a recess with a bed in it, with green serge curtains hanging from a pole, and eaten into lace-work by moths. The window was almost opaque with the thick deposit of dirt, which made a blind unnecessary. The whitewashed walls had a fuliginous tone from the smoke of charcoal and turf burned in the stove. There was a chipped water-jug on the chimney shelf, with two bottles and a cracked plate. A tumble-down, worm-eaten chest of drawers contained the man's linen and clean clothes. The rest of the furniture was a night-table of the

commonest kind, a table worth perhaps forty sous, and two kitchen chairs almost bare of straw. The picturesque costume of the customary beggar hung to a nail, and beneath it, the formless hemp shoes he wore, with his enormous staff and his hat, composed a sort of panoply of pauperism.

Cérizet, as he went in, cast a rapid look at the old man, whose head rested on a pillow brown with dirt, and with no slip. His sharp profile, resembling the faces which engravers thought it amusing to make out of the precipitous rocks in a landscape, stood out darkly against the green curtain. Toupillier, a man nearly six feet high, was staring hard at some imaginary object at the foot of his bed; he did not move when he heard the door creak—a heavy door lined with iron and furnished with a strong bolt to protect his domicile.

"Has he his wits?" asked Cérizet, and Madame Cardinal started back, recognizing only his voice.

"Pretty well," said she.

"Come out on the stairs, then, that he may not hear us. This is what we must do," he went on, speaking in his future mother-in-law's ear. "He is weak, but he does not look badly, and we have quite a week before us yet. Besides, I will find a doctor to suit us. I will come in one evening with six poppy-heads. In the state he is in, you see, a decoction of poppy-heads will make him sleep soundly. I will send you in a truckle-bed under the pretext that you want to spend the nights with him. When he is asleep we will lift him on to the other bed, and when we have counted the money hidden in that precious piece of furniture, we shall easily find some means of removing it. The doctor will say that he has some days yet to live, and above all that he can make a will."

"My son!"

"But we must find out who the tenants are of this wretched building. Perrache might give the alarm, and every lodger is of course a spy."

"Well, I know already," replied Madame Cardinal, "that

Monsieur du Portail, who has the first floor, takes care of a mad girl, whom I heard called Lydie, only this morning, by an old Flemish nurse named Katt. The old man has only one servant, an old man like himself, called Bruno, who does everything but the cooking."

"But the binder and stitcher," said Cérizet, "they work from early dawn. Well, we must see," he added, as a man having no fixed plan. "At any rate, I will go round by the Mayor's offices in your district to get a copy of Olympe's register of birth and have the banns published. Next Saturday week, the wedding!"

"Go it, go it! old rascal!" said Madame Cardinal, giving her formidable son-in-law a friendly shove with the shoulder.

As Cérizet went downstairs he was surprised to see the little old man, this du Portail, walking in the garden with one of the foremost personages of the government, Count Martial de la Roche-Hugon. He hung about the courtyard examining the old house, built in time of Louis XIV.; its yellow walls, though of good masonry, were bowed like old Toupillier; he stared into the workshops and counted the hands employed; then, finding himself observed, Cérizet went away, reflecting on the difficulty of extracting the sum hidden by the sick man, small in compass as it was.

"How can I get it away at night? The doorkeeper is on the watch; by day twenty pairs of eyes would be on me. It is not so easy to stow twenty-five thousand francs in gold about one's person."

Social existence has two limit-lines of perfection. The first is a stage of civilization in which the moral sense being equally developed does not allow of crime, even in thought: the Jesuits have been known to reach this sublime height, which was normal in the primitive church; the second is a state of civilization in which the mutual supervision of its members makes crime impossible. This, which is the stage aimed at by modern society, makes a felony so difficult to carry out that a man must be really out of his mind to at-

tempt it. In fact, none of the misdeeds which the law fails to touch go unpunished; the social verdict is even more severe than that of any tribunal.

If a will is destroyed without a single witness to the deed, as was done by Minoret, the postmaster of Nemours, the crime will be traced by the keen eye of virtue, as a theft is detected by the police. No act of dishonesty goes undiscovered; wherever there is damage done, the scar remains discernible.

Things can no more be made away with than men, so thoroughly are they numbered, especially in Paris, and houses watched, streets guarded, open places observed. Crime, to live at ease, needs sanction like that granted to the Bourse, like that given to Cérizet by his clients, who never complained and would only have been alarmed if they had failed to find their skinflint in his kitchen on a Tuesday morning.

"Well, my dear sir," said the porter's wife, going out to meet Cérizet, "how is the poor man, the favorite of God?"

"I am not the doctor," said Cérizet, definitively giving up the part. "I am Madame Cardinal's man of business. I have advised her to have a bed brought in so as to be at hand day and night to attend to her uncle; but perhaps he may need a nurse."

"I could nurse him very well," said Madame Perrache; "I have been a monthly nurse."

"Well, we shall see," answered Cérizet. "I will settle all that. Who lodges on the first floor?"

"Monsieur du Portail. Oh, he has lived here for thirty years. He is a gentleman of private means, sir, a highly respectable party. A man of means, who lives on his means, you know. He used to be in business. It is about eleven years since he began to try to restore the daughter of a friend to her right mind—Mademoiselle Lydie de la Peyrade. She is well cared for, I can tell you, by two of the most famous doctors. Why, only this morning they had a consultation. But up to now nothing has done her any

good; indeed, she has to be closely watched, for sometimes she gets up in the night."

"Mademoiselle Lydie de la Peyrade!" cried Cérizet. "Are you quite sure of the name?"

"Madame Katt, the housekeeper, who does their little bit of cooking, has told me a hundred times; though, as a rule, neither Monsieur Bruno, the man-servant, nor Madame Katt, will talk at all. As to asking them for information, it is like speaking to a wall. We have been porters here these twenty years, and never heard a word about Monsieur du Portail. What is more, monsieur, he owns that little house alongside. You see the door in the wall? Well, he can go out when he pleases, and let people in without our knowing anything about it. Why, the house-landlord himself knows no more than we do. If any one rings at the side door Monsieur Bruno goes to open it."

"So you did not see the gentleman go in with whom the sly old devil is now talking?"

"Lord!—No, indeed."

"This is the daughter of Théodose's uncle," said Cérizet to himself, as he got into his cabriolet. "Can this du Portail be the man who in past days sent that young rascal two thousand five hundred francs? Supposing I were to favor the old gentleman with an anonymous letter, telling him of the scrape his advocate nephew is in over the twenty-five thousand francs in promissory notes."

An hour after this a complete camp-bed came in for Madame Cardinal, to whom the inquisitive porter's wife offered her services to provide her with food.

"Would you like to see Monsieur le Curé?" asked Madame Cardinal of the old man, for she observed that the arrival of the bed had roused him from his torpor.

"I want some wine," said the sufferer.

"How are you feeling, Père Toupillier?" asked Madame Perrache, in her most insinuating voice.

"I tell you I want some wine," repeated the man, with such determined energy as would not have been expected from his weak condition.

"We must know first if it will be good for you, Uncle Buncle," said Madame Cardinal, in coaxing accents. "Wait and see what the doctor says."

"The doctor! I won't have one, I tell you. And what the devil are you here for? I want nobody."

"My dear uncle, I came to see if anything would tempt your fancy. I have some nice fresh flounders. Now a *teeny* flounder, heh! cooked in butter with a relish of lemon-juice?"

"Much good will your fish do me," replied Toupillier; "it is sheer rottenness. The last you brought me, six weeks ago, is in the cupboard still; you may have it back."

"Mercy, how ungrateful these sick folks are!" said the niece, in an undertone, to Madame Perrache.

Meanwhile, to show her solicitude, she settled the pillow under the sick man's head, saying:

"There, uncle! Is not that better now?"

"Leave me alone," Toupillier bellowed, in a rage. "I want to be let alone. Wine, I say, and leave me in peace."

"Now, don't be cross, uncle, and we will fetch you the wine."

"Wine at six sous, Rue des Canettes!" cried the beggar.

"Yes," said Madame Cardinal; "but wait till I count over my cash. I want to make your place look decent. Why, an uncle, you see, is a second father, and I should stick at nothing!"

She sat down, her knees wide apart, on one of the strawless chairs, and turned out all the contents of her pocket on her apron—a knife, a snuff-box, two pawntickets, some crusts, and a quantity of copper cash, from among which she finally extracted a few silver pieces.

The performance, intended to prove the most generous and zealous devotion, had no effect whatever. Toupillier did not seem even to have seen what she was doing. Exhausted by his delirious energy in demanding his favorite panacea, he made an effort to change his position, and, turning his back on his two nurses, after muttering again "Wine—wine!" he

uttered no further sound but the stertorous breathing that showed that the lungs and tubes were becoming clogged.

"I must get him his wine, at any rate," observed Madame Cardinal, restoring to her pocket all the cargo she had unloaded, in no pleasant mood.

"If you do not care to put yourself about, Mère Cardinal——" said the porter's wife, ready to offer her services.

The market-woman hesitated for a moment; then, reflecting that she might gain some light from a conversation with the wine-seller, and also that so long as Toupillier was hatching the treasure the woman might safely be left with him, she said:

"Thank you, Madame Perrache, but I may as well get into the way of knowing the places where he shops."

Noticing behind the night-table a dirty bottle that would hold at least two litres:

"Rue des Canettes, I think he said?" she asked of the porter's wife.

"Corner of the Rue Guisarde," replied Madame Perrache. "Master Legrelu, a tall, handsome man with large whiskers and no hair on his head."

Then lowering her voice, she added:

"His six-sous wine, you know, is prime Roussillon. However, the wine-seller knows all about that. It will be enough if you say that you have come from his old customer, the Saint-Sulpice beggar."

"I don't need telling anything twice," replied Madame Cardinal, opening the door but not leaving the room.

"By the by," said she, coming back, "I wonder what he burns in his stove, if I wanted to heat anything to do him good."

"Bless you," said the porter's wife, "he can't have laid in firing for the winter; why, it is midsummer——"

"And not a pan or a pot of any kind," the niece went on. "What a way of living, good God! Nor a thing to go to fetch home provisions in, for I declare it looks dreadful mean to let everybody see what you have got at market."

"I can lend you a flat basket," said the porter's wife, anxious to oblige.

"No, thank you, I will get a market-basket," replied the fish-hawker, thinking more of what might have to be carried out of the house than of what she should bring into it. "There must be an Auvergnat somewhere near by who sells wood and charcoal?"

"At the corner of the Rue Féron you will find what you want. A fine shop, too, with logs painted like faces in an archway over the door; you could believe they were going to speak to you."

"I can see it!" said Madame Cardinal.

Before finally leaving she had an idea of the deepest hypocrisy. She had evidently hesitated to leave the woman alone with the sick man. She now said:

"Madame Perrache, you will not leave him, will you?—poor dear!—not till I come back?"

The reader may have observed that in embarking on this undertaking Cérizet had no very definite plans as to the part he would play. That of a doctor, which he had at first thought of assuming, he was afraid of trying, and he had introduced himself to the Perraches as Madame Cardinal's man of business. As soon as he was alone he saw more clearly the difficulties of the case; his first plan, complicated by a doctor, a nurse, and a notary, was encompassed by insurmountable obstacles. A will in favor of the niece could not be made on the spur of the moment. It would take a long time to accustom the old beggar's suspicions and obstinate temper to the new idea, but death was at hand, and in the winking of an eye might balk his most elaborate preparations.

As to performing the scene from Regnard's play *Le Légataire,* it was out of the question in the midst of the refined watchfulness of the police, and of a state of civilization of which the first aim would seem to be to deprive the romance and drama of life of the last breath of vital air that remains to them.

By giving up the notion of persuading the old man to make his will, the eighteen hundred francs a year and the house in the Rue Notre-Dame de Nazareth would of course go to the heirs-at-law, and Madame Cardinal, to whom he had hoped to secure these two items, would come in for no more than her share. Still, abandoning this visible portion of the estate was the surest way of appropriating what was hidden. Besides, if this could best be secured to begin with, what would hinder a subsequent attempt to get a will signed?

So Cérizet, reducing the operations to the most simple terms, fell back on the manœuvre before mentioned of administering an infusion of poppy-heads and trusting to this mode of warfare alone. He was on his way back to Toupillier's lodgings to give Madame Cardinal fuller instructions when he met her with the basket she had just purchased on her arm. In it she had the desired panacea.

"Heyday!" said the money-lender, "is this how you mount guard?"

"I had to go out to get him some wine," replied the woman. "He bellowed out like a creature on hot bars that I was to leave him in peace, and that he wanted to be alone, and that I should give him his jorum! The man is persuaded that strong Roussillon is the best cure for his complaint, and I am going to give him his bellyful! When he is screwed he will be quieter perhaps."

"You are right," said Cérizet pompously. "Sick people should never be contradicted; you must medicate the wine by a little infusion of this"—and he raised one of the basket-lids and slipped in some poppy-heads,—"you will secure the poor man a sound nap for five or six hours at least. I will look in this evening, and there will be nothing, I fancy, to hinder our investigating the value of the estate."

"All right," said Madame Cardinal, with a wink.

"Till this evening," said the usurer, without more words. He foresaw a difficult and discreditable business, and did not care to be seen talking to his accomplice in the street.

On returning to Toupillier's garret, the woman found him still in the same torpid state. She dismissed Madame Perrache, and went to the door to take in a small load of sawn logs which she had ordered of the Auvergnat in the Rue Féron. She had provided herself with an earthen pipkin, fitting the hole at the top of the stove on which poor folks set the pot to stew, and in this she placed the poppy-heads, soaking in two-thirds of the bottle of wine she had brought; she lighted a good fire beneath so as to get the decoction as soon as possible.

The crackling of wood, and the warmth that soon raised the temperature of the room, roused Toupillier from his heavy slumbers. When he saw fire in the stove:

"What, a fire?" cried he. "Do you want to burn the house down?"

"Why, uncle," said Madame Cardinal, "I have bought the wood with my own money to take the chill off the wine. The doctor does not wish you to drink it cold."

"Well, and where is the wine?" asked Toupillier, somewhat pacified by hearing that the cooking was not at his expense.

"You must wait till it has boiled," replied she. "The doctor insisted on it. However, if you will be quiet I will give you just a drop to stay your stomach. I take the responsibility, and you must not tell."

"I will have no doctor! Scoundrels who put men out of the world," cried Toupillier, roused at the thought of a drink. "Now, where is that wine?" he added, in the tone of a man whose patience has run out.

Quite sure that if her yielding did him no harm it would at any rate do him no good, the woman half-filled a wine-glass and held it with one hand, while with the other she raised him into a sitting posture to drink. Toupillier clutched the glass with his lean and greedy fingers, and having swallowed the contents at one gulp, he cried, "What a thimblefull! and watered at that!"

"No, you must not say that, uncle. I went myself to get

it from Legrelu, and I have given it to you just as I bought it. But wait for the rest to simmer a bit; the doctor said you could have it whenever you were thirsty."

Toupillier shrugged his shoulders and submitted; when, a quarter of an hour after, the mixture was ready, Madame Cardinal, without waiting to be asked, brought him a cup full to the brim.

The avidity with which he drank it gave the old man no time to observe that it was drugged; but at the last mouthful he was aware of a vapid, nauseous flavor, and flung the cup down on the bed, crying out that she had poisoned him.

"Well, look, that is all the poison in it," replied Madame Cardinal, draining the few drops that remained at the bottom of the mug, and she then assured the old man that if the wine did not taste as usual it was because his mouth was foul.

By the end of this discussion, which was carried on for some time, the narcotic began to take effect, and in an hour the invalid was sleeping heavily.

While waiting for Cérizet, having nothing to do, Madame Cardinal had an idea. It struck her that to facilitate the coming and going which might be necessary when the time came for removing the treasure, it would be well to mitigate the vigilance of the Perraches. So, after taking care to throw the poppy-heads away, she called the porter's wife and said:

"Just taste his wine, Madame Perrache. Would you not have thought he was ready to drink a hogshead? And after one cupful he wants no more!"

"Here's to you," said the woman, clinking her glass against that of Madame Cardinal, who took care to fill her own with pure wine.

Madame Perrache, not so keen a connoisseur as the old beggar, and drinking the wine cold, detected no flavor in the insidious liquor which could lead her to suspect the narcotic; on the contrary, she declared that it was "like velvet," and only regretted that her husband was not at home to take toll of it.

After a long chat the women parted. Madame Cardinal then made a meal off some cold meat she had bought, and the remains of the Roussillon in the bottle, and crowned it with a nap. To say nothing of the excitements of the day, the fumes of one of the strongest wines in the world would amply account for the soundness and length of her slumbers; when she awoke it was already dark.

Her first care was to look at the sick man. His sleep was disturbed, and he was dreaming aloud.

"Diamonds," said he, "diamonds? When I am dead—not before."

"Hallo!" said Madame Cardinal. "What next? He has got some diamonds——"

And seeing that Toupillier seemed to be suffering from a violent nightmare, instead of trying to relieve him by a change of position, she leaned over him to catch every word, in the hope of hearing some important revelation.

At this juncture a sharp tap at the door, from which this capital sick-nurse had taken care to remove the key, announced Cérizet's return.

"Well?" said he, as she admitted him.

"Well, he took the drug. He has been sleeping like a top these four hours. Just now, while dreaming, he talked about some diamonds."

"Bless me!" said Cérizet, "it would not astonish me to find some. When these paupers once set their heart on riches, there is nothing they will not pick up——"

"And pray, my good friend," asked the woman, "what possessed you to go and tell Mother Perrache that you were not a doctor, but my man of business? We agreed this morning that you were to call yourself a doctor——"

Cérizet did not choose to confess that the assumption of such a title had seemed to him too rash; this might have frightened his accomplice.

"I saw that the woman was just going to consult me, and I got rid of her in that way."

"I see," said Madame Cardinal, "great wits jump! and

it was my game, too, to turn matters the other way round; that I should have a man of business here seemed to put notions into the cobbler-woman's head. Did the Perraches see you come in?"

"I fancied I saw the woman asleep in her chair."

"She ought to be," said Madame Cardinal, with meaning.

"What! Really?" said Cérizet.

"Enough for one is enough for two," said the fish-hawker. "I treated her to the rest of the mixture."

"As to the husband, he is there, sure enough," said Cérizet, "for as he pulled his thread he gave me a gracious nod of recognition which I could very well have dispensed with."

"Wait till it is quite dark, and we will get up a little performance that will puzzle him a bit."

And, in fact, a quarter of an hour later, the woman, with an amount of spirit that amazed the money-lender, carried through a little farce of seeing out a gentleman who pressed her to take no such trouble. Making a great show of escorting the doctor as far as the front gate, she pretended, half-way across the courtyard, that the wind had blown her candle out, and then, while trying to relight it, she extinguished Perrache's candle too. All this little scene, with a bewildering flow of exclamations and talk, was so dexterously managed that the porter, if called before the bench, would not have hesitated to swear that the doctor, whom he had seen come in, had come down and quitted the premises between nine and ten o'clock.

As soon as the partners were thus in quiet possession of the scene of their operations, Madame Cardinal quite unwittingly acted on a hint of Béranger's, and for fear some prying neighbor might get a glimpse of their proceedings, she hung her rabbit-wool shawl over the window like a curtain, as though to screen Lisette's amours.

In the Luxembourg quarter the stir of life is over at an early hour. Before ten o'clock every sound had ceased, in the house as well as outside. One resident alone, bent on

finishing an instalment of a novel, kept the conspirators in check for some little time; but no sooner had he placed the extinguisher on his candle than Cérizet was anxious to set to work. By beginning at once there was a better chance that the sleeper would remain under the influence of the narcotic; also, if it did not take them too long to discover the treasure, Madame Cardinal might have the front door open to let her out, under pretence of having to go to the druggist for some remedy unexpectedly required. It might be hoped that the Perraches, after the manner of gatekeepers roused from their first sleep, would pull the latch-cord without getting out of bed. Thus Cérizet could get out at the same time, and they could at once remove a part of the coin, at any rate, to safe hiding. As for the remainder, it would be easy to find some way of disposing of it in the course of the morrow.

Cérizet, great in council, was but inefficient in action; without the woman's stalwart help he could never have lifted what may be called the corpse of the ex-drum-major. Dead asleep and absolutely unconscious, Toupillier was an inert weight which could fortunately be handled without any great caution. The athletic fishwife, doubly strong under the excitement of avarice, succeeded in transferring her uncle to the other bed without misadventure, and the mattress was eagerly searched.

At first they found nothing; the woman, being pressed to explain how she had persuaded herself in the morning that her uncle was lying on a hundred thousand francs, was obliged to own that the gossip of the Perraches and her own perfervid imagination had been chiefly responsible for her alleged conviction. Cérizet was furious. After cherishing the idea and hope of a fortune for a whole day, and making up his mind to a rash and compromising undertaking, to find himself at last face to face with emptiness! The disappointment was so crushing that, had he not feared the worst from an encounter with his future mother-in-law, he would have been tempted to raging extremity.

At any rate, he could vent his passion in words. Madame Cardinal, violently attacked, would say no more than that all hope was not yet lost, and with the faith that removes mountains tossed the bed over from top to bottom, and was about to empty the mattress after rummaging it in all its corners, but that Cérizet would allow no such extreme measure, remarking that the autopsy of the bedding would leave a litter of straw on the floor which would give rise to suspicions.

Madame Cardinal, to leave no burden on her conscience, insisted on removing the sacking bottom of the bed, in spite of Cérizet, who thought this absurd; and certainly the ardor of her search had sharpened her senses, for, as she lifted the wooden frame, she heard the sound of some small object falling out onto the floor. Ascribing to this trifle, which any one else might have overlooked, greater importance than seemed at all likely, the spirit of research moved her to take the candle, and after feeling about for some time in the filth that covered the ground, at last she laid her hand on a small object in polished steel, about half an inch long, of which the use was to her a perfect mystery.

"It is a key!" exclaimed Cérizet, who had looked on with no little indifference, but whose imagination now went off at a gallop.

"Aha! You see!" said Madame Cardinal, with exultant pride. "But what can it belong to?" added she, thoughtfully. "A doll's trunk?"

"Not at all," replied Cérizet. "It is a modern invention. Very strong locks may be opened with this little key."

And as he spoke he glanced rapidly at all the furniture in the room, went to the chest of drawers and pulled them all out, peeped into the stove, under the table—nowhere could he see a sign of such a lock as the little key might fit.

Suddenly the woman had a flash of inspiration.

"Stay," said she, "I remember that as he lay on his bed the old thief kept his eyes fixed on the wall in front of him."

"A cupboard concealed in the wall? That is not impossible," said Cérizet, eagerly taking up the candle.

But after having carefully examined the door in the recess, which faced the head of the bed, he found nothing but thick hangings of spiders' webs and dust.

He then tried the sense of touch, which is in some ways keener, tapping and feeling the wall all over. At the spot off which Toupillier had never taken his eyes he certainly discerned the hollow sound of a space within, and at the same time he felt sure that he was tapping on wood. He rubbed the place hard with his handkerchief rolled into a ball, and under the layer of dirt that he had cleared away he presently found an oak plank closely fitted into the wall; at one edge of this board was a tiny round hole—the keyhole of the lock to which the key belonged.

While Cérizet turned the key, which worked without difficulty, Madame Cardinal, holding the light, stood pale and gasping. But, dreadful disappointment! When the cupboard was opened nothing was visible but an empty space, vainly illuminated by the candle she eagerly thrust forward.

Leaving this fury to fulminate exclamations of despair and to shower all the most abusive epithets of her vocabulary on her uncle, Cérizet preserved his presence of mind. He put his arm into the opening and all round the bottom of it.

"There is an iron chest," said he; adding impatiently, "Come, show me a light, Madame Cardinal!"

Then, as the glimmer did not shine far enough into the space he wanted to investigate, he snatched the dip out of the neck of a bottle in which Madame Cardinal had stuck it for lack of a candlestick, and, holding it in his fingers, moved it carefully about over every portion of the iron cover he had found within.

"No lock!" said he, after a minute examination. "There must be a secret spring."

"What a cunning villain he is, the old hunks!" said Madame Cardinal, while Cérizet's bony fingers poked and punched every spot.

"Aha! I have it!" he exclaimed, after feeling about for more than half an hour, during which Madame Cardinal's life seemed to be suspended.

Under Cérizet's pressure the iron lid sprang open. Inside the wall, among a heap of gold pieces tossed loosely into a fairly large space thus thrown open, a red morocco jewel-case, was seen, which by its dimensions promised splendid booty.

"I will take the diamonds for the marriage portion," said Cérizet, when he saw the magnificent set contained in the case. "You, mother, would not be able to dispose of them. I leave you the gold for your share. As to the consols and the house, they are not worth the worry of getting the old fellow to make a fresh will."

"Stop a minute, my boy!" said the woman, who thought this division rather too summary. "We will count the coin first."

"Hark!" said Cérizet, pausing to listen.

"What?" asked she.

"Did you not hear some one moving below?"

"No; I heard nothing."

Cérizet signed to her to be silent, and listened more attentively.

"I hear steps on the stairs," he said a minute after; and he hastily replaced the jewel-case in the iron chest, which he vainly tried to close.

While he was ineffectually struggling with it, the steps came nearer.

"Yes, indeed; some one is coming!" gasped Madame Cardinal in terror. Then, clutching at a straw, she added, "Pooh! I dare say it is the mad girl. They say she often wanders round at night."

If so, the crazy woman had a key to fit the door, for a moment later it was turned in the lock. Madame Cardinal hastily measured the distance between herself and the door; had she time to push the bolt? But calculating that she had not, she blew out the candle to give herself the chance of darkness.

A vain precaution! The spoil-sport who came in had a candle in his hand. As soon as she saw that the enemy was a little, frail-looking old man, Madame Cardinal, with flashing eyes, flew to meet the visitor like a lioness about to be robbed of her cubs.

"Compose yourself, my good woman," said the old man, with sarcastic coolness. "I have sent for the police; they will be here in a minute."

At the word police, you might have knocked Madame Cardinal down with a feather, as the saying goes.

"Why, sir? the police!" she gasped. "We are not thieves."

"I would not wait for them, all the same, if I were you," said the old man. "They sometimes make awkward mistakes."

"I may slope, then?" said she incredulously.

"Yes; as soon as you have handed over to me anything you may by chance have slipped into your pockets."

"Indeed, my good sir, I have nothing in my hands, nothing in my pockets. I want to harm nobody; what I came for was only to nurse this poor innocent uncle of mine—search me if you like."

"Well, be off then, all right," said the little old man.

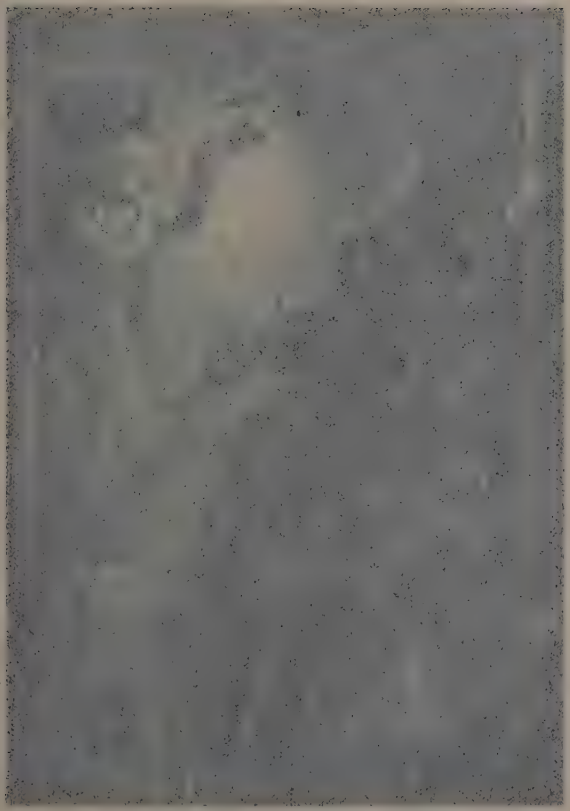
Madame Cardinal did not wait to be told twice; she made off down the stairs.

Cérizet seemed inclined to follow in her wake.

"As for you, monsieur, it is another matter," said the stranger. "We shall have something to say to each other. However, if you prove manageable, everything may be satisfactorily settled."

Whether the effect of the drug was exhausted, or the commotion going on close to him had roused Toupillier, he now opened his eyes, looked about him as if he did not quite know where he was, and then, seeing his precious cupboard open, his excitement gave him strength to shout in a voice that might have roused the whole house: "Thieves! Thieves!"

"No, Toupillier, you are not robbed," said the little old man. "I came up in time, and nothing is touched."



The spectator who came in had a candle in his hand

robbed of her cubs.

me if you like."

factorily settled."

The spoil-sport who came in had a candle in his hand

"And are you not going to have that villain arrested?" cried Toupillier, pointing to Cérizet.

"The gentleman is not a thief," replied the old man. "On the contrary, he is a friend of mine come up with me to lend me support."

Then, turning to Cérizet, he went on in a lower tone: "I believe, my dear fellow, that we had better put off the few words I have to say to you till to-morrow at ten—at Monsieur du Portail's, the house adjoining this. After what has taken place this night, I may tell you that it will be awkward for you if you should fail to keep the appointment. I should inevitably find you again; for I have the honor to know who you are—you are the man whom the opposition papers at one time called *Cérizet the brave.*"

In spite of the ironical point of this reminiscence, Cérizet, perceiving that he would be no more severely dealt with than Madame Cardinal, was only too glad to foresee such a termination, and, promising to be punctual, he made his escape.

Cérizet did not fail to be punctually on the spot as he had been directed.

He was examined through a wicket, and then, on giving his name, was admitted to the house and conducted to du Portail's study, where the old man was writing.

Without rising, and merely nodding to his visitor to be seated, the old man finished a letter. After closing it, and sealing it with such care and accuracy as showed him to be either excessively precise and fastidious, or else a man who had held some diplomatic post, du Portail rang for Bruno, his man-servant, and, giving him the letter, desired him to take it to the Justice of the Peace for the district.

He elaborately wiped the steel pen he had been using, rearranged everything symmetrically on his table, and it was not till all these fidgety little matters had been attended to that he addressed Cérizet, saying:

"You know that poor Monsieur Toupillier died in the night?"

"No, indeed," said Cérizet, assuming the most sympathetic air he could command. "You, monsieur, give me the first tidings."

"You might at least have expected it. When a dying man is dosed with a large cupful of hot wine which has been drugged into the bargain—since Madame Perrache, after drinking a wine-glassful, has lain in an almost lethargic sleep all night—it is clear that arrangements have been made to hasten the catastrophe."

"I cannot know, monsieur, what Madame Cardinal may have given to her uncle," said Cérizet, with dignity. "I was rash enough, I confess, to help the woman in her care and interest to preserve the property to which, as she told me, she had undoubted right. But as to attempting the old man's life, I am incapable of such a thing; nothing of the sort ever entered my thoughts."

"Was it you who wrote me this letter?" said du Portail, point-blank, and taking from under a Bohemian glass paper-weight a note, which he showed to the money-lender.

"That letter?" said Cérizet, with the hesitation of a man who doubts whether he had better deny or confess.

"I am sure of the fact," du Portail went on. "I happen to have a mania for autographs. I have one of yours, picked up at the time when the opposition had bestowed on you the glory of martyrdom. I have compared the writing, and it is you, beyond a doubt, who yesterday, in this note, informed me of the pecuniary straits in which young la Peyrade just now finds himself."

"Knowing that you had in your care a young lady named la Peyrade," said the money-lender, "who is probably Théodose's cousin, I suspected that you might be the unknown protector from whom, on more than one occasion, my friend has received the most liberal assistance. As I have a great affection for the poor boy, in his interest I made so bold——"

"You did very right," said du Portail. "I am delighted to have met a friend of his. Nor need I conceal from you that last evening it was this very fact that shielded you.—

But what is the history of these twenty-five thousand francs' worth of promissory notes? Is he doing badly in business? Does he lead a dissipated life?"

"Far from it," said Cérizet; "he is a perfect puritan. He is a man of devout habits, and as an advocate will plead for none but the poorest clients. Also he is about to marry a rich woman."

"Aha! He is going to be married!—and to whom?"

"There is an idea of his becoming the husband of Mademoiselle Colleville, daughter of the Secretary to the Mayor of the Twelfth Arrondissement. The girl herself has no fortune, but a certain Monsieur Thuillier, her godfather, member of the Municipal Council, has promised to give her a suitable portion."

"And who is working the matter?"

"La Peyrade has done the Thuilliers great services; he was introduced to them by Monsieur Dutocq, clerk to the justice of the peace for that district."

"But you say in this letter that the notes of hand were signed in favor of Monsieur Dutocq. Is it a case of matrimonial brokerage?"

"Something of the sort, very probably," replied Cérizet. "As you know, monsieur, such transactions are common enough in Paris; the clergy even do not scorn to meddle in them."

"Then the marriage is almost settled?" said du Portail.

"Why, yes; within the last few days, especially, matters have gone on rapidly."

"Well, my dear sir, I rely on you to see that it comes to nothing. I have other purposes for Théodose, another match to propose to him."

"Excuse me," said Cérizet, "but to hinder his marriage would be to make it impossible for him to pay his debts, and I may respectfully point out to you that these bills are serious matter. Monsieur Dutocq is clerk to the Justice of the Peace, which is as much as to say that it will not be easy to get round him on any point of law and interest."

"As to Monsieur Dutocq's claims, you must purchase the bills," said du Portail. "You and he must settle that between you. At a pinch, and if Théodose should prove refractory to my purpose, those bills, in our hands, will be a valuable weapon. You will make it your business to prosecute in your own name, and you will not be the loser; I will undertake to pay the original sum and the costs."

"You do business handsomely, sir," said Cérizet, "it is really a pleasure to work for you. But now if you should think the time had come to inform me more particularly as to the mission you do me the honor to entrust to me——"

"You spoke just now," said du Portail, "of Théodose's cousin, Mademoiselle Lydie de la Peyrade. This young lady —no longer very young, for she is nearly thirty—is the natural daughter of the famous Mademoiselle Beaumesnil, of the Théâtre-Français, and of la Peyrade, Commissioner-General of the Police under the Empire, and our friend's uncle. Till the hour of his death, which was sudden, leaving his daughter—whom he had acknowledged and whom he positively worshiped—entirely destitute, I had lived on terms of intimate friendship with that excellent man."

Cérizet, proud to show that he knew something of du Portail's private life, observed:

"And you, monsieur, have fulfilled the duties of that friendship to the uttermost, for, by taking the interesting orphan to dwell under your roof, you undertook a difficult charge. Mademoiselle de la Peyrade's health requires, I have heard, the most patient and tender care."

"Yes," said the old man. "At the time of her father's death the poor child had such a cruel experience that her reason remained impaired; but a happy change has lately taken place, and no longer ago than yesterday I called a consultation between Doctor Bianchon and the two head physicians of the Salpêtrière. These gentlemen are unanimously agreed that marriage and the birth of a child would certainly cure her; as you understand, the remedy is too easy and too pleasant not to be tried."

"Then it is to Mademoiselle Lydie de la Peyrade that you wish Théodose to be married?" said Cérizet.

"As you say," replied du Portail. "But you must not suppose that, if our young friend should accept this arrangement, I require him to devote himself altogether gratuitously. Lydie is pleasing in person, she is accomplished, she has a charming temper, and will be able to secure for her husband a handsome position in public business. She also has a nice little fortune, consisting partly of what her mother had to leave her; of all I possess—which, as I have no direct heirs, I shall settle on her at her marriage; and, finally, of a pretty considerable sum that has come to her this past night."

"What!" cried Cérizet, "did old Toupillier——?"

"A holograph will—here it is—constitutes her the old beggar's sole legatee. So, as you see, it was handsome on my part to take no further steps in the matter of your attempt last night, for you were intending to rob me of our property."

"Good Heavens!" said Cérizet, "I do not think of excusing Madame Cardinal's aberration," said Cérizet. "At the same time, as heir-at-law, dispossessed in favor of a stranger, it seems to me that she has some claim to the mercy you were prepared to show her."

"In that you are mistaken," replied du Portail, "and the handsome legacy by which Mademoiselle de la Peyrade seems to have been enriched, is simply a restitution."

"Restitution?" said Cérizet, puzzled.

"Yes, and nothing is easier to prove. Do you remember a great diamond robbery committed some ten years since by which one of our famous actresses lost her jewels?"

"Certainly," said Cérizet, "I was at that time editor of one of my papers and wrote the Paris news myself. Wait a minute—the actress was Mademoiselle Beaumesnil."

"Exactly so. Mademoiselle Lydie de la Peyrade's mother."

"And so that wretch Toupillier—— No," added Cérizet, "I remember the thief was punished. His name was Charles Crochard; and it was whispered, I recollect, that he was the

natural son of a great personage, the Comte de Granville, Attorney-General in Paris under the Restoration."

"Well," said du Portail, "this is what happened. The theft, as you will also remember, was committed in a house in the Rue de Tournon where Mademoiselle Beaumesnil lived. Charles Crochard, a handsome young fellow, was on a very intimate footing there, it would seem."

"Yes, yes," said Cérizet. "I recall very vividly the lady's embarrassment when she was called upon to state the facts, and the loss of voice she suffered from when the presiding judge asked her how old she was."

"The robbery," said du Portail, "was boldly committed in broad daylight, and Charles Crochard, having possessed himself of the jewel-case, went to the church of Saint-Sulpice, where he had made an appointment with an accomplice to meet him. As chance would have it, instead of the man he expected, who was a few minutes late, Crochard found himself face to face with a famous member of the detective force whom he perfectly well knew, for the young rascal had fallen into the hands of the law before this. The absence of his assistant and the presence of this man, who, as he fancied, looked at him with suspicion, the disorder of his conscience, and finally a swift turn which, by the merest chance, the detective made towards the door, made the thief suspect that he had been watched.

"In his panic he lost his head; his first point was to get rid of the jewel-case, which, if found upon him, would prove his guilt. He felt certain he should be captured on leaving the church, imagining it to be surrounded by the police, and, seeing Toupillier in his place near to the holy-water vessel, he went close up to him, and having convinced himself that nobody was watching them, 'Here, my good man,' said he, 'will you take care of this parcel for me? It is a box of lace. I am going to a house close by, to a certain Countess who never pays her bills; instead of giving me my money she is sure to ask to see this, which is something quite new, and to ask me to let her have it on credit. I would rather not

have it about me. But whatever you do,' he added, 'do not open the paper it is wrapped in, for there is nothing so difficult as to refold a parcel in the old creases.' "

"What an idiot!" cried Cérizet guilelessly. "His instructions were enough to make the man eager to see the contents."

"You are a shrewd philosopher," said du Portail. "An hour later, when Charles Crochard, finding no cause for alarm, came back to fetch the parcel, Toupillier had disappeared. As you may suppose, at early mass next morning Charles Crochard was eager to meet the holy-water server, and found him duly exercising his functions; but night, they say, brings wisdom. The dear man audaciously declared that nothing had been given into his care and that he did not know what Crochard was talking about."

"And of course it was impossible to tackle him and make a commotion," observed Cérizet, who was very near sympathizing with a trick so neatly done.

"The theft had no doubt already become known," du Portail went on, "and Toupillier, who was a remarkably clever fellow, had, of course, calculated that the thief by accusing him would reveal himself and be obliged to give up his plunder. When the case was tried Charles Crochard never said a word about the way he had been tricked, and when he was sentenced to ten years with hard labor, during all the six years he spent on the hulks—part of the sentence having been remitted—he never opened his lips to a living soul as to the breach of confidence to which he had been a victim."

"I call that pluck!" cried Cérizet. The story fired him with admiration; he viewed it from the point of view of the connoisseur and artist.

"During this time," du Portail said, "Madame Beaumesnil died, leaving her daughter some remnants of a large fortune, and more especially these diamonds, which she especially mentioned, *in the event of their ever being recovered.*"

"Aha!" said Cérizet, "that spoiled the game for Toupillier; for having such a man as you to deal with——"

"Thinking only of revenge, Charles Crochard's first act on regaining his liberty was to accuse Toupillier as receiver of the stolen jewels. Toupillier was brought to trial, but defended himself with such blunt good-humor that, as there was absolutely no proof against him, the case was dismissed. He nevertheless lost his place by the holy-water vessel in Saint-Sulpice, and only with great difficulty obtained leave to beg at the church door. For my part, I was convinced of his guilt; notwithstanding his dismissal, I had him narrowly watched, but I trusted chiefly to my own vigilance. As a man of independent means and ample leisure, I stuck close to my man and made it the business of my life to unmask him.

"At that time he was living in the Rue du Cœur Volant; I contrived to rent a room adjoining his, and one night, through a hole patiently made with a gimlet in the partition between, I saw him take the jewel-case out of a very ingeniously contrived hiding-place and spend nearly an hour in gazing with rapture at the diamonds, which he moved about to catch the play of light, and pressed passionately to his lips. The man loved them for themselves, and had never thought of making money of them."

"I quite understand," said Cérizet. "A monomaniac, like Cardillac the jeweler, about whom a melodrama was written."

"Just the very same thing," said du Portail. "The wretched man was in love with the jewels; indeed, when I called upon him shortly after and gave him to understand that I knew everything, that he might not be deprived of what he called the comfort of his life he implored me to leave him in possession of them for life, pledging himself in return to leave everything he had to Mademoiselle de la Peyrade. He at the same time told me that he owned a considerable sum in gold, to which he was adding every day, besides a small freehold and money in the funds."

"If he meant to act honestly," said Cérizet, "the bargain was a good one. The interest of the capital sunk in the set of diamonds was quite made up by the other items."

"Well, as you have seen, my good fellow, I was not ill-judged in trusting him. However, I took sound precautions. I insisted on his taking a room in the house I lived in, so that I could watch him closely; the hiding-place of which you so ingeniously discovered the secret was contrived under my directions,—but what you do not know is that the secret spring, as it opens the iron chest, at the same time rings a loud bell in my room, to warn me of any attempt at robbery that may endanger our hoard."

"Poor Madame Cardinal," said Cérizet, with a laugh, "what a sell for her!"

"This, then, is the present situation," said du Portail. "The interest I feel in my old friend's nephew, apart from the relationship which makes me think the alliance suitable, has led me to wish that Théodose should marry his cousin and her fortune. But as the young lady's mental condition might possibly make la Peyrade averse to my views, I have thought it as well not to propose the match to him myself. You crossed my path; I know you to be clever, crafty, and it at once occurred to me to place this little matrimonial negotiation in your hands.

"Now, understand clearly, you must speak of a young lady of wealth who suffers indeed from a drawback, but who has a makeweight—a nice little fortune. Name no one, and come to me at once to report how the idea has been received."

"Your confidence," said Cérizet, "is a pleasure and an honor to me, and I will do my best to justify it."

"You must be under no illusion," said du Portail. "The first impulse of a man who has another engagement in view will be to refuse; but we will not confess ourselves beaten. I do not readily give up a scheme when I believe it to be right, and even if we were to carry our zeal for la Peyrade's happiness so far as to have him imprisoned for debt at Clichy, I am determined not to be defeated in a project of which the results will, I am certain, show him that I was happily inspired. So, in any case, take the credit notes off Monsieur Dutocq's hands."

"At par?" asked Cérizet.

"Yes, at par, if you can do no better. We need not look too closely at a thousand francs one way or the other. Only, that matter once settled, Monsieur Dutocq must promise us his support, or at least his neutrality. From what you say of the other match, I need not point out to you that we must lose no time in putting the irons in the fire."

"I have an appointment to meet la Peyrade two days hence," Cérizet observed. "We have a little matter to settle. Do not you think that it would be as well to wait till then? At that meeting I may speak of this match incidentally. In case of his refusing, that, as seems to me, would save our dignity."

"So be it," said du Portail; "that is not delay. And remember, monsieur, that if you succeed you will find in me, not the man to call you to account for your rashness in aiding Madame Cardinal, but one under serious obligations and ready to serve you to the utmost; a man, too, whose influence is wider than may generally be believed."

After such a kind speech the two men could only part in the best understanding, and equally well satisfied on both sides.

Like the old Turnstile, the *Rocher de Cancale,* whither the scene is now to be transferred, is no more than a memory. A wine-shop with a pewter-plated counter has taken the place of that *Temple of Taste,* that sanctuary of European fame which had been the great focus of gastronomy all through the Empire and the Restoration.

On the day before that on which they had agreed to meet, la Peyrade had this brief note from Cérizet:

"To-morrow, lease or no lease, at the *Rocher*—half-past six."

As to Dutocq, Cérizet saw him every day, being his copying-clerk; he had invited him by word of mouth; but the attentive reader will note a difference in the hour named to this second guest. "At the *Rocher*—a quarter past six,"

Cérizet had said, so it was clear that he wished to have him to himself for at least a quarter of an hour before la Peyrade should arrive.

The money-lender meant to spend that quarter of an hour in bargaining for the purchase of la Peyrade's promissory notes; and he fancied that his offer, made point-blank, without any preparation, would be more cordially accepted. By not giving the holder time to consider the matter he might be induced to sell cheap; and having once acquired the bills below par, the usurer might consider whether it would be better for him to keep the difference, or to gain credit with du Portail by handing over to him the benefit he might secure. It may be said, indeed, that apart from all subsidiary considerations Cérizet would have tried to get the better of his friend. In him it was instinct, a craving of nature. He had as great a horror of the straight line in business as the admirers of English gardens have in laying out their walks.

Dutocq, who was still in debt for a part of the price of his connection, and obliged to save very closely, lived so frugally that a dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale* was a sort of event in his life. He appeared with the punctuality that showed his interest in the appointment, and at precisely a quarter past six walked into the box at the restaurant where Cérizet awaited him.

"Oddly enough," said he, "here we are in exactly the same conditions as when we first took up this business of la Peyrade's; only the spot for the meeting of the three emperors is somewhat better chosen. I prefer the Tilsit of the Rue Montorgueil to the Tilsit of the Rue de l'Ancienne-Comédie and Pinson's wretched eating-house."

"On my word," replied Cérizet, "I hardly know whether the results justify the change; for where, when all is done, are the profits from the formation of that triumvirate?"

"Well, it was a conditional agreement," said Dutocq, "and we cannot complain that la Peyrade has lost time in achieving his establishment at the *Thuilleries,* if I may be allowed to pun. The rascal has gone ahead, you must admit."

"Not so fast," said Cérizet, "but that his marriage is at this moment a very doubtful matter."

"Doubtful? How?"

"Yes. I have been instructed to propose another match to him, to bolster him up; and I very much doubt whether he will have any choice offered him."

"But the devil's in it, man; can you think of lending a hand to promote this second match, when we have a mortgage on the first?"

"My good friend, we cannot always control circumstances. I plainly saw that under those that have been laid before me the marriage we had planned is simply swept down stream. So then I looked to see what could be saved from the wreck."

"Bless me! Are they fighting for this boy, Théodose? Who is the girl? Has she a fortune?"

"A very presentable dowry; quite as good as Mademoiselle Colleville's."

"Then she may go hang. La Peyrade backed the notes, and he shall pay."

"He shall pay—indeed! That is the question. You are not in business, nor is Théodose. It might occur to him to repudiate the paper. Who can tell whether the Court, when informed as to their origin, seeing that the Thuillier match is broken off, may not quash them as drawn without value received? I can snap my fingers at such a discussion; it cannot affect me; besides, I have taken precautions. But you, as clerk to a justice of the peace, would surely after such an action have differences to settle with the Chancellor's office."

"Indeed, my good fellow," said Dutocq, with the temper of a man who finds himself confronted with an argument for which he has no answer, "you really have a mania for meddling in things——"

"I have told you," said Cérizet, "that this affair came to me, and I saw so clearly from the first that there was no chance of making fight against the evil influence which threatens us, that I made up my mind to save myself by a sacrifice."

"What kind of sacrifice?"

"Well, I sold my notes of hand, and left it to the purchaser to fight it out with our friend, the advocate."

"And who took them of you?"

"Who do you suppose would put himself into my shoes, but some one who had an interest in the other marriage, so as to be able to coerce Master Théodose, by curtailing his liberty, if necessary."

"Ah, then they really require the bills I hold?"

"Certainly. However, I would not deal till I had consulted you."

"Well, and what is the bid?"

"What I was willing to take for mine. Knowing better than you how dangerous their rivalry would be, I agreed to take ready money at a bad discount."

"But what are the terms, come?"

"I parted with them for fifteen thousand."

"Don't tell me," said Dutocq, with a shrug. "Presumably you see your way to recovering the difference on the brokerage; and the whole thing, after all, may be a got-up business between you and la Peyrade."

"You do not mince your words, my good friend. A rascally idea enters your head, and you blurt it out with beautiful candor! But fortunately you will presently hear me make the proposal to Théodose, and you can judge by his demeanor how far we are in collusion."

"Well, well," said Dutocq, "I withdrew the insinuation. But really your principals are perfect corsairs. A man is not to be bled so desperately; and besides I have not, as you have, a premium to look forward to."

"That, my poor friend, is just what I argued. I said to myself: Poor Dutocq is dreadfully hampered for money to pay off the last debt on his office; here he has a chance of clearing it off at one stroke.—The event proves how risky it would be to compromise la Peyrade; we offer you cash in hand and on the nail; it is not, after all, such a bad bargain."

"Very true—but to lose two-fifths!"

"Look here," said Cérizet, "you spoke just now of a premium. I see a way by which you may secure one; if you will undertake to fight tooth and nail against the Colleville match, and take the opposite side from that on which you have hitherto stood, I do not despair of getting you the round sum of twenty thousand francs."

"Then you evidently think that la Peyrade will not take kindly to this new scheme? that he will kick? Pray, is the heiress in question a damsel from whom he has already taken something on account?"

"All I can tell you is that we expect a tough pull before we get him round."

"I am ready and willing to pull on your side and annoy la Peyrade; but five thousand francs! think of it—that is too much to give up."

At this moment the door of the box was opened and the waiter announced the expected guest.

"You can bring dinner," said Cérizet, "I expect no one else."

It was evident that Théodose was trying his flight to upper social spheres; he constantly gave his mind to the decoration of his person. He was in evening dress, a tailcoat and patent leather shoes, while the other two men received him in morning dress, with muddy boots.

"I am afraid, *messeigneurs,* that I am a little late," said he. "But that infernal Thuillier, with the pamphlet I am correcting for him, is the most intolerable nuisance. I unfortunately agreed that we should correct the proofs together, and we have a fight over every paragraph. 'What I don't understand,' says he, 'the public won't understand,' and I have to stand out for every word."

"What do you expect, my dear boy," said Dutocq; "when a man wants to get on he must have courage enough for some sacrifices. When once you are married you can hold up your head."

"Yes, indeed!" said la Peyrade, "I shall, I hope; for since the time when you first made me eat this bread of bitterness, I have become very tired of it."

"Cérizet is going to give us some better food," said Dutocq.

At first they devoted themselves wholly to doing justice to the bill of fare ordered by Cérizet—the first tenant, and to reminiscences of better days. As always happens at these business dinners, when each one is thinking of the matters to be discussed, and yet avoids speaking of them for fear of losing some advantage by seeming too eager, the conversation for some time was on general subjects; and it was not till dessert was served that Cérizet made up his mind to ask Théodose what had been decided on with regard to his lease.

"Nothing, my dear fellow," said la Peyrade.

"Nothing—how is that? I gave you ample time to come to some conclusion."

"And some conclusion has, in fact, been arrived at: there is to be no first tenant. Mademoiselle Brigitte herself will sublet."

"That is another thing," said Cérizet, with stern reserve. "After your promises to me, I own I was far from expecting such a result."

"How can I help it, my good friend! I promised, barring contingencies; it was not in my power to alter matters. Mademoiselle Thuillier, as a masterful woman and a living instance of perpetual motion, made up her mind that she could manage the business of the house, and put into her own pocket the profit you hoped to make. In vain did I represent to her all the worry and anxiety she was bringing on herself.

" 'Pooh, nonsense!' said she, 'it will keep my blood stirring and be very good for my health.' "

"But it is terrible!" said Cérizet. "The poor woman will not know which way to turn; she has no idea of what it is to have an empty house on her hands to be filled with tenants from top to bottom."

"I urged all those arguments," said Théodose, "but I did not begin to change her mind. There you are, my worthy democrats; you fomented the Revolution of '89; you flattered

yourselves that it was a capital speculation to dethrone the nobility in favor of the middle class, and now you are simply turned out of doors. It may sound like a paradox, but it was not really the yokel who could be taxed and worked to the bone, it was the aristocrat. The aristocracy, to preserve their dignity by prohibiting themselves a vast number of vulgar details, even that of learning to write, found themselves dependent, in fact, on the crowd of servants whom they necessarily had recourse to, and were compelled to trust for three-fourths of their daily actions. Those were the golden days of the intendants, or stewards—the crafty and wide-awake factors through whose hands all the interests of the great families had to pass, and who, though they may not have deserved the odious reputation they earned, by the force of circumstances grew fat on the mere parings of the vast fortunes they had to deal with. Nowadays we have no end of practical aphorisms. 'If you want a thing well done, do it yourself. There is nothing disgraceful in knowing your own business,' and a thousand other humdrum axioms which, by making every man a man of business, have suppressed the middleman.

"How can you expect that Mademoiselle Brigitte Thuillier should not try to manage her house when dukes and peers go themselves to the Bourse, examine their leases, have every paper read to them before signing, and go to discuss every point with the notary whom they formerly scorned as a scrivener?"

During la Peyrade's harangue Cérizet had had time to recover from the blow that had taken his breath away; and, to lead by a transition to the other matter entrusted to his management, he said, with an air of indifference:

"All your remarks, my dear boy, are exceedingly clever; but the thing which most clearly proves our discomfiture is that you are not on such a footing of personal influence with Mademoiselle Thuillier as you would have us believe. She slips through your fingers when she chooses, so it strikes me that your marriage is far from being such a settled thing as Dutocq and I were willing to think it."

"No doubt," said la Peyrade, "the work we have sketched still needs some finishing touches, but I believe it to be well on towards completion."

"I, on the contrary, am sure that you have lost ground, and nothing can be more natural; you have just done these people a very great service; that is never forgiven."

"Well, we shall see," said Théodose. "I still hold them by more than one line."

"No, indeed; you thought you could do wonders by loading them with kindness, and now that they are independent they will treat you as dirt; the human heart is made so, especially the heart of the middle classes. It is not only that I myself, in the present instance, feel the blow that is upsetting you; in your place I should not think I was standing on solid ground, and if some chance were afforded me to turn back——"

"What! Merely because I have failed in securing the lease for you, am I to throw the handle after the axe?"

"As I tell you," said Cérizet, "I am not viewing the matter from the standpoint of my own interest. But, as I have no doubt whatever that you made every conceivable effort, as my sincere friend, to gain the point, your failure and dismissal are to me a very unsatisfactory symptom. In fact, they lead me to speak of a matter which I should not otherwise have mentioned, since, in my opinion, when a man has an end in view he should go straight on to it without looking in front, or behind, or allowing himself to be diverted from it by any other ambition."

"Well, well!" said la Peyrade, "what is all this tall talk about? What do you want me to do? And what will it cost?"

"My dear boy," said Cérizet, ignoring his impertinence, "you yourself can judge of the value of such a find as a young lady, well educated, gifted with beauty and talents—and a fortune, at least equal to Céleste's, of her very own, *plus* fifty thousand francs worth of diamonds, like Mademoiselle George's in a provincial poster; besides, what must chiefly at-

tract a man of an ambitious spirit, some influence in politi cal circles for her husband's benefit."

"And you have this jewel in your pocket?" asked la Peyrade incredulously.

"Better still; I am authorized to make you the offer. I might almost say I am commissioned to do so."

"My good man, you are fooling me, unless this phœnix has some prohibitive defect."

"Ah, I confess," said Cérizet, "there is one little drawback,—not in the family connection, for, to tell the truth, the lady has none."

"Oho! a natural child!—and morèover?"

"Moreover, she is not so young as she was; she may be nine-and-twenty; but nothing can be easier than to picture a maid not yet quite old as a young widow."

"And that is the worst you have to say?"

"Yes, all that is irremediable."

"What do you mean by that? A case of rhinoplastics?"

The word as addressed to Cérizet was singularly offensive. In fact, this tone had been very evident in all the lawyer had said during dinner. However, it was not the usurer's game to seem offended.

"No," said he, "our nose is as well made as our figure and foot; but we are, I must own, somewhat afflicted with hysteria."

"I see," said Théodose, "and as there is but one step from hysteria to insanity——"

"Just so," Cérizet eagerly put in. "Troubles have left our brain slightly affected, but the doctors are unanimously agreed that at the birth of the first child not a sign will remain of this little mental disturbance."

"The doctors, of course, are infallible!" replied the lawyer, "but in spite of all your discouragement you must excuse me, my good friend, if I continue to pay my addresses to Mademoiselle Colleville. It seems an absurd confession, but the truth is that I am gradually falling quite in love with the little girl. It is not that her beauty is remarkable, or

that the splendor of her fortune has dazzled me; but the girl has an artless soul added to a strong foundation of good sense, and, which settles the question in my mind, there is something very attractive in her sincere and solid piety. I believe she will make her husband happy."

"Yes," said Cérizet, who, having been on the stage, remembered Molière's word, "*'Your hymen will be soaked in sweets and joys.'*"

This quotation from *Tartuffe* nettled la Peyrade, and he retorted:

"The contact of her innocence will purge me of the infection of the low company I have hitherto kept."

"And you will pay your notes of hand," added Cérizet. "With as little delay as possible, if you take my advice, for Dutocq, here present, confessed to me but just now that he would not be sorry to see the color of your money."

"I? Never!" exclaimed Dutocq. "On the contrary, our friend is well within the time allowed by law."

"Well, I, for my part, am quite of Cérizet's opinion," said Théodose. "The less a debt is legally due, and the more disputable and discreditable it is, the greater haste to pay and have done with it."

"But, my dear la Peyrade," said Dutocq, "you speak with such bitterness!"

La Peyrade, taking out his pocket-book, merely said:

"Have you the bills with you, Dutocq?"

"Indeed, my dear boy, I have not," said the other, "and am the less likely to have them about me because they are now in Cérizet's hands."

"Well," said the advocate, rising, "whenever you like to call, I pay over the counter. Cérizet can tell you that."

"What, are you off without waiting for coffee?" said Cérizet, utterly amazed.

"Yes; I have an appointment for eight o'clock in an arbitration case. And we have said all we had to say: You have not got the lease; you have got your twenty-five thousand francs; Dutocq's are ready for him whenever he chooses to

call at my office. I see nothing to hinder me from going where my business calls me, wishing you a very good evening."

"Heyday!" said Cérizet, as Théodose went out, "this is a rupture."

"Aye, and made as emphatic as possible," remarked Dutocq. "The air with which he took out his pocket-book!"

"But where the devil did he find the money?" asked the money-lender.

"In the same place, no doubt," replied Dutocq ironically, "where he found that which he produced to redeem the notes you were obliged to let him have so cheap."

"My good friend," said Cérizet, "I will explain the circumstances in which that insolent rogue released himself from me, and you will see if he did not literally rob me of fifteen thousand francs."

"That is very likely; but you, my kind agent, wanted to do me out of ten thousand."

"No, indeed. I was instructed to purchase your share of the bills; and after all, I had gone as far as twenty thousand when our gentleman came in——"

"At any rate," said Dutocq, "when we leave I will go to your house and you shall give me his notes of hand; for, as you may suppose, to-morrow morning at the earliest human hour, I shall call at what monsieur calls his office. I will not give his paying mood time to cool."

"And you will be very wise; for, take my word for it, there will be some rough play in his career before long."

"Then do you really mean that story of a crazy girl whom he is to marry? I must confess that, in his place, with affairs looking so promising of success, I should not have jumped at the offer. Nina and Ophelia are very interesting on the stage, but in the domestic circle——"

"In the domestic circle, where they have a comfortable fortune, you are only the guardian," said Cérizet sapiently, "in point of fact, you get the fortune without the wife."

"Well," said Dutocq, "that is one way of looking at it."

"If you like, we will get our coffee elsewhere," Cérizet suggested. "This dinner has ended so flatly that I only want to get out of the place—it is very stuffy."

He called the waiter. "The bill," said he.

"M'sieu', it is paid."

"Paid—and by whom?"

"By the gentleman who went out just now."

"But it is inconceivable!" cried Cérizet. "I ordered the dinner, and you allowed a stranger to pay for it."

"It is no fault of mine," said the waiter; "the gentleman paid the lady at the desk. She supposed it was all right, no doubt. It is not so very common to find gentlemen fighting for the pleasure of paying."

"Well—all right!" said Cérizet, dismissing the waiter.

"No coffee, gentlemen?" said the man before he left. "It is paid for."

"For that very reason we will not have it!" said Cérizet irritably. "It is really monstrous that in a house of this character such a blunder should be possible. Can you conceive of such insolence?" he added, when the waiter was gone.

"Faugh!" said Dutocq, taking his hat; "it is a schoolboy's trick to show that he has money in his pocket. It is a new sensation, evidently."

"No, no," said Cérizet, "it is not that. It is a way of insisting on the quarrel. 'I do not choose to be indebted to you even for a dinner'—that is what it means."

"In point of fact, my dear fellow," said Dutocq, as they went down the steps, "this banquet was intended to celebrate your enthronement as principal tenant. He could not get you the lease; so I can understand that his conscience was ill at ease under the notion of allowing you to pay for a dinner which, like my promissory notes, were for no value received."

Cérizet made no comment on this ill-natured explanation. They were in front of the desk where the lady presided who had allowed herself to be paid by the wrong man; and the

usurer, to save his dignity, felt bound to speak his mind. The two men then went out together, and the money-lender took his master to find a cup of coffee in a poor sort of tavern in the Passage du Saumon.

Here the Amphitryon who had got off so cheaply recovered his temper; he was like a fish out of water restored to its element. Sunk as he was to such a level as makes a man ill at ease in places where better company is to be met, it was almost with delight that Cérizet found himself in his element again in this saloon where pool was being noisily played for the benefit of *a hero of the Bastille*.

He had a reputation in this establishment as a billiard-player, and was requested to join in the game already begun. He bought a ball, that is to say, one of the players sold him his turn and his chances. Dutocq took advantage of this arrangement to make himself scarce, going off, as he said, to inquire after a sick friend.

Not long after, just as Cérizet, in his shirt-sleeves and with a pipe between his teeth, had achieved one of those masterly strokes which rouse the gallery to frenzied admiration, on casting an exultant glance behind him he saw a terrible kill-joy.

Among the lookers-on, du Portail was gazing at him over his stick, as it were, on which his chin was propped.

A flush spread over Cérizet's cheeks, and he hesitated to recognize and bow to the gentleman whom he had little expected to meet in such a place. Incapable of making the best of this unpleasant incident, he lost his presence of mind; this affected his play, and a few strokes after he found himself put out.

While he was putting on his coat, feeling very cross, du Portail rose, and pushing by him as he went out, said in an undertone:

"Rue Montmartre, at the end of the Passage."

When they met, Cérizet was so clumsy as to try to explain his being found in such loose attire and in this place.

"But to see you there I was necessarily there myself," said du Portail.

"That is true," said the money-lender, "and I was considerably surprised at finding a peaceful resident of the Saint-Sulpice quarter in that den."

"Which sufficiently proves," said the gentleman, in a voice which stifled curiosity and cut off all explanations, "that I am in the habit of going everywhere and anywhere, and that my lucky star can guide me on the track of those whom I want to see. I was thinking of you just as you came in. Well, what have you done?"

"Nothing of any use," said Cérizet. "After playing me a horribly scurvy trick and keeping me out of a splendid stroke of business, our man rejected all overtures with supreme contempt. There is no hope of buying in Dutocq's bills; la Peyrade is in funds, it would seem, for he wanted to take them up then and there, and will undoubtedly pay them off to-morrow morning."

"Then he regards his marriage to Mademoiselle Colleville as a settled thing?"

"Not only that, but his latest pretence is to give out that it is a marriage for love. He favored me with a long speech to convince me that he was sincerely attached to her."

"Very good," said du Portail, "stay the proceedings"—by which he meant, do nothing further in the matter. "I will undertake to bring our gentleman to reason. Come to me to-morrow to give me full particulars as to the family he wants to marry into. You have missed one stroke of business; do not let that worry you; by helping me others will turn up."

So speaking, he called a hackney coachman who happened to be driving past, got into the cab, and with a friendly but patronizing nod to Cérizet, told the man to drive to the Rue Honoré-Chevalier.

As he walked down the Rue Montmartre towards the Estrapade quarter, Cérizet thrashed his brain to guess who this little old man could be, with his abrupt speech, his imperious tone, and his manner when he addressed people as

of holding them with grappling-irons; who came, too, so far from home to spend his evening in a place where his distinguished superiority made him appear quite out of his element.

He had got as far as the Halle without hitting on any solution of this problem; but he was roughly roused from his meditation by a hearty slap on the back.

He hastily turned round, and found himself face to face with Madame Cardinal, not that there was anything to astonish him in meeting her in this neighborhood, whither she came in the small hours of the morning to lay in her stock in trade.

Since the evening they had spent in the Rue Honoré-Chevalier, in spite of the leniency then extended to her, the good woman had thought it prudent to pay very brief visits to her own lodgings; and for the last two days had been drowning the sore of her discomfiture in liquor taken "short," and called "drops of comfort."

Her voice was thick and her face on fire as she said:

"Hallo, daddy! And how did you get on with the little old man?"

"I explained to him in a very few words," said the moneylender, "that, so far as I was concerned, he was under a misapprehension. You, my poor woman, have behaved throughout with unpardonable recklessness. When you asked me to help you in securing your uncle's property, how was it that you did not know of his having a natural daughter, to whom he long since left all he had by will? The little old man, who interrupted you in your absurd attempt to anticipate the inheritance, was neither more nor less than the legatee's guardian."

"Oho! So that is a guardian!" said the woman. "Well, a pretty sort they are—your guardians! To talk to a woman at my time of life—only because she wishes to find out if her uncle has anything to leave—about sending for the police! If that is not abominable, disgusting!"

"Come, Madame Cardinal," said Cérizet, "you have nothing to complain of; you got off cheap."

"And you?—I should like to know! You, who picked the locks and wanted to pocket the diamonds under pretence of marrying my daughter! As if she would even look at you—my daughter! And a legitimate daughter, she is! 'Never, mother,' says she, 'never would I give my heart to a man with a nose like that!'"

"Then you have found the girl?"

"No longer ago than last evening... She has given up her vermin of an actor, and is, I flatter myself, in a splendid position, eating off silver, having her brougham by the month, and highly respected by a lawyer who would marry her out of hand, but that he must wait till his parents die, because his father, as it happens, is a mayor, and such a marriage might displease the government."

"My good woman, what stuff you are talking. His father is his mother?"*

"Dear me, what next! Mayor of the district of the eleventh arrondissement,—Monsieur Minard, a retired cocoa merchant, enormously rich."

"Ah, to be sure, to be sure. I know him. And Olympe, you say, is with his son."

"That is to say, they do not live together, to avoid scandal, though his intentions are strictly honorable. He lives with his father, and meanwhile they have bought all their furniture, and it is housed, with my daughter, in rooms near the Chaussée d'Antin. A stylish quarter, isn't it?"

"Why, that seems to me a capital arrangement," said Cérizet, "and as it is clear that Heaven did not mean us for each other——"

"Yes, that's just where it is. I believe the child will turn out quite a comfort to me; and there is a thing I want to ask your advice about."

"What is that?" asked Cérizet.

"It is just this: my daughter being in such luck, of course I cannot go on crying fish in the streets, and since I am disinherited by that uncle of mine, don't you think I have a right to ask for an allowance for clement?"

* Mère, mother—maire, mayor.

"You are dreaming, my good woman; your daughter is under age; it is you who ought to be keeping her, and not she who ought to allow you aliment."

"And so those who have not, are to give to those who have!" exclaimed Madame Cardinal, her temper rising. "A pretty thing is the law—as well as your guardians, who talk of sending for the police for a mere nothing. All right! Let him fetch the police! Let him have me executed. That will not hinder me from saying that rich men are all thieves, and the poor people ought to make another revolution to get their rights, which you, my boy, and my daughter, and her lawyer Minard, and the little guardian, will have to knock under, d'ye see?"

Seeing that his ex-stepmother had reached a really incoherent pitch of excitement, Cérizet abruptly left her, and when he was fifty paces away he could hear himself still pursued by abuse which he promised himself he would pay her out for, the very next time she should come to the bank, in the Rue des Poules, to ask him to make things easy for her.

As he got near the house, Cérizet, who was anything rather than brave, had a shock; he perceived a figure in ambush by the door—a man, who, on his approach, moved out and was evidently coming to meet him.

Happily it was only Dutocq; he had come for la Peyrade's notes of hand. Cérizet handed them over to him with some ill-humor, complaining of the distrust implied in a visit at such an unseemly hour.

Dutocq cared little enough for his touchiness, and early next morning he called on la Peyrade.

Théodose paid him on the nail, and to some effusive speeches which Dutocq was tempted to make when he felt the cash in his pocket, he replied with marked coldness. Everything in his demeanor betrayed the attitude of a slave who had just broken his chains, and who does not care to make any particularly Christian use of his freedom.

As he let his late creditor out, Dutocq found himself con-

fronting a woman dressed like a servant, who was about to ring the bell. She was, as it would seem, an acquaintance of Dutocq's, for he said to her:

"So-ho, mother, you found a craving to consult a lawyer, heh? You are quite wise. At the family council some very serious stories were told about you."

"Heh! Thank God, I am afraid of no one, and I can hold up my head and march on," replied the woman thus addressed.

"So much the better!" said the law clerk, "so much the better, but you will probably be summoned, ere long, to account for this business before the judge. But after all you are in good hands, and our friend la Peyrade can give you the best advice."

"Sir, you are quite mistaken," replied the woman; "it was not on account of what you fancy that I came to consult monsieur the lawyer."

"Well, well, take care of yourself, my good woman, for I warn you that you will be plucked in style. The relations are furious with you, and they will stick to the notion that you are very rich."

As he spoke, Dutocq fixed an eye on Théodose, who avoided his gaze and desired his client to step in.

This was what had taken place, the day before, between this woman and la Peyrade.

La Peyrade, it may be remembered, was in the habit of going, every morning, to early mass in his parish church. For some time past he had found himself the object of curious attention on the part of the woman who had just now entered his room; like Dorine in *Tartuffe,* she had been careful to attend regularly *at his exact hour,* and these proceedings had puzzled him greatly.

An unspoken passion? Such an explanation was incompatible with the mature age and pragmatical devotion of the woman who, wearing the close-fitting cap, *à la Janséniste,* by which a few ardent votaries of the sect may still be identified in the Saint-Jacques quarter, covered up all her hair

like a nun; while, on the other hand, her clothes were almost fastidiously neat; and a gold cross hanging round her neck from a black velvet ribbon excluded the hypothesis of timid poverty anxious to delay the moment when it must boldly stand confessed.

On the morning of the day when the dinner was to be given at the Rocher de Cancale, la Peyrade, tired of these manœuvres which were at last beginning to occupy his thoughts, and perceiving that this puzzle in a close cap seemed anxious to speak to him, had gone up to the woman and asked if there were anything he could do for her.

"I believe, sir, that you are the famous Monsieur de la Peyrade, the advocate of the poor?"

"My name is la Peyrade, and I have, in fact, had the opportunity of helping some of the poorer people of this quarter."

This was the Provençal's modest version of the matter—not, at that moment, too excessively a Southerner.

"If, sir, you would of your kindness listen, and advise me."

"The place," said Théodose, "is not very well chosen for such a consultation. What you have to say is important, it would seem, for I have noticed you moving about me for some little time; I live close by, Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, and if you will take the trouble to come to my rooms——"

"I shall not trouble you too much, sir?"

"Not at all; it is my business to attend to my clients."

"At what hour, not to put you to any inconvenience, sir?"

"When you please; I shall be at home all the morning."

"Then I will attend mass again and take communion; I should not have dared to do so at this service, the idea of speaking to you, sir, would have distracted my mind. When I have performed my devotions, I can be at your rooms by about eight, if that suits you, sir."

"Perfectly; and you need not make so much ceremony over it," said la Peyrade impatiently.

This touch of irritation may, perhaps, have arisen from a little professional jealousy, for it struck him that he had to deal with a practised hand, who could give him points.

At the appointed hour, not a minute before or after, the bigot rang the lawyer's bell, and he, after persuading her, with some difficulty, to sit down, desired her to speak.

The good woman was then afflicted with the little postponing cough that comes in to secure a short delay when approaching a difficult subject. Finally, making up her mind to the plunge, she explained the object of her visit.

"I came," said she, "to ask you, sir, to be so good as to tell whether it is true that a very charitable man, now dead, left a fund for rewarding servants who have done well by their masters?"

"That is to say," replied la Peyrade, "Monsieur de Monthyon founded a set of prizes which have, in fact, been frequently given to zealous and exemplary servants. But mere good conduct is not enough to earn one of these rewards; some act of heroic devotion must be proved, of truly Christian self-sacrifice."

"Religion," said the bigot, "enjoins humility, and I certainly should not dare to praise myself; but for more than twenty years I have lived in the service of an old man, dull beyond all you can fancy, who has spent all he has on inventing things, and whom I am obliged to maintain—and there are persons who think I am not altogether unworthy to obtain the prize."

"It is, no doubt, from among such cases that the Academy selects the candidates," said la Peyrade. "What is your master's name?"

"Monsieur Picot; old Father Picot he is always called in the neighborhood; he walks about dressed like a guy at carnival-time, and all the children troop at his heels, crying after him: 'Good-day, Daddy Picot.'—But that is the man all over; he never cares what folks think of him; he is always wool-gathering. What is the good of my wearing myself to the bone to cook him something tasty? If you asked him

what he had for dinner he could not tell you.—A clever man, too, who has turned out some good pupils; perhaps, sir, you know young Phellion, a professor at the Saint-Louis school, who still comes pretty frequently to our house."

"Then your master is a mathematician?" said la Peyrade.

"Yes, sir; and mathematics have been his ruin. He has taken up some queer ideas, in which it would seem there is no sense at all, after ruining his eyesight at the Observatory, near by, where he was employed for a good many years."

"Well," said la Peyrade, "you must get some testimonials to prove all your devotion to the old man, and I will then draw you up a form of application, and take the preliminary steps."

"How kind you are!" cried the woman, clasping her hands. "But if you would allow me—there is a little difficulty——"

"And what is that?"

"I have been told, sir, that to get a prize you must be very poor indeed."

"Well, not quite a pauper; at the same time the Academy endeavors, no doubt, to help those who are in poor circumstances, and who have made sacrifices really beyond their means."

"As for sacrifices, I may flatter myself I have made enough, when the whole of a little fortune I had from my parents has been spent in the housekeeping; and for more than fifteen years I have never had a penny of my wages, which, at three hundred francs a year, with the compound interest, mounts up to a nice little sum, as you will allow, sir."

At the words "compound interest," which presupposed some financial experience, la Peyrade looked more closely at this Antigone.

"Then the difficulty in question——?" said he.

"You will not regard it as an objection, I hope, sir, that I should lately have lost a very rich uncle, who died in Eng-

land, and who, after doing nothing for his family during his lifetime, left me by his will the sum of twenty-five thousand francs."

"Of course," said la Peyrade, "nothing can be more natural or more perfectly legitimate."

"And yet, sir, I have been told that it might do me a mischief in the opinion of the judges."

"That, no doubt, is possible, because, as you now are in easy circumstances, the devotion you still propose to show to your master, as I suppose, will be evidently less meritorious."

"I certainly will never desert the good man, in spite of his faults, although the poor little property I have come in for will be in the greatest peril."

"How so?" asked la Peyrade, who was curious.

"Bless me, sir, if he thinks I have any money, if it is but a mouthful, it will all be swamped in his inventions for perpetual motion, which have been his ruin, and mine too."

"Then, as I understand," said la Peyrade, "what you wish is that this legacy should remain a secret both from the Academy and from your master?"

"You are so clever, sir; you understand so well!" said the pious dame, smiling.

"And to that end," the lawyer went on, "you do not wish to keep the money in your own hands?"

"That my master may find it and grab it!—Besides, as you may believe, I should be glad, if only to enable me to get him some little extra treats, that the money should bring in some interest."

"And the more the better," observed la Peyrade.

"Well, sir, say five to six per cent."

"Then it would appear that what you want my advice on is not only a memorial to apply for a prize for virtue, but also a sound investment?"

"You are so kind, sir, so charitable, so encouraging!"

"The form of application, after making some inquiry, will not be difficult; but an investment affording good se-

curity, and at the same time kept absolutely secret, is far less easy to manage."

"But if I dared——" said she.

"What?" said la Peyrade.

"You understand me, sir?"

"I?—not in the least."

"I prayed to Heaven but just now that you might yourself take charge of the money. I should feel so confident that it was in safe hands, and that nothing would be said about it."

At this moment la Peyrade was reaping the reward of the farce he had played of devotion to the poorer class. Nothing could have inspired this woman with the boundless confidence she felt in him, unless it were the chorus of praise from all the porters' wives in the neighborhood. The thought of Dutocq flashed on him, and he felt ready to believe that this woman had been sent to him by Providence. But the more he longed to take advantage of such a chance of purchasing freedom, the more it behooved him to seem to yield against his will; and he made endless difficulties.

In point of fact he had no great belief in his client's character, and he was not anxious, in robbing Peter to pay Paul, as the saying goes, to throw over a creditor who, after all, was in the same boat with him, in favor of an old woman, who might become troublesome at any moment, and, in her eagerness to recover her money, might make such a fuss as would seriously damage his reputation. He determined, therefore, to play a desperate game.

"My good woman," said he, "I am in no want of money, and I am not rich enough to pay you the interest on a sum of twenty-five thousand francs without investing it. The only thing I can do is to put it, in my own name, in the hands of a notary, Monsieur Dupuis, a pious man whom you may see any Sunday on the official bench in the parish church. Notaries, as you know, give no form of receipt; I shall therefore give you none. I can only pledge myself to leave among my papers, in case of my death, a note that

will secure you the repayment of your capital. As you see, it is a matter of blind confidence—and even so, I take the money most unwillingly and merely to oblige a person who commends herself so strongly to my good-will by her pious sentiments, and by the charitable use she proposes to make of her little fortune."

"If you see no other way, sir——"

"This is the only plan that seems to me possible," replied la Peyrade. "However, I do not despair of getting you six per cent, and at any rate you may be certain that it will be punctually paid. Only it might happen that the notary could not command the capital under six or twelve months' notice, because the moneys which notaries usually invest in mortgages are commonly tied up for a longer or shorter term. Also, as soon as you have gained the prize for virtue, which in all probability I can enable you to get, as you then may no longer care to conceal your little fortune—though I quite understand your wishing to do so at present—I must warn you that in case of any indiscretion on your part the capital will be immediately returned to you, and I shall not hesitate to tell the world at large how you have concealed this legacy from the master to whom you profess such entire devotion. This, as you must see, will reveal you as a hypocrite, and detract greatly from your reputation for piety."

"Oh, sir," said the woman, "can you suppose I would tell anything I ought to hold my tongue about?"

"Bless me, my good woman, in business we must provide against every contingency. Money makes quarrels between the best friends, and leads to the most unforeseen issues. So take time and think it over; come again a few days hence. Between this and then you may have thought of some plan that you like better, and I myself, though proposing so recklessly an arrangement which I confess does not please me, may have discerned difficulties which escape me at the present moment."

This threat, hinted at in conclusion, was certain to clinch the matter.

"I have thought it all over," said the woman. "With so religious a man as you, sir, there can be no risk."

She took a small pocketbook out of the bosom of her dress and extracted twenty-five thousand-franc banknotes.

The dexterity with which she counted them was a revelation to la Peyrade. The woman was evidently used to fingering money, and a queer notion flashed through his brain—"Supposing I were receiving stolen goods!"

"No, no," he said. "In order to draw up the petition to be presented to the Academy, I must first, as I told you, make some little inquiry, so I shall be calling on you in the natural course of things by and by. At what hour are you alone?"

"My master goes out at about four to take a turn in the Luxembourg."

"And where do you live?"

"Rue du Val-de-Grâce, No. 8."

"Very well, at four o'clock then; and if—as I see no reason to doubt—my information is satisfactory, I will then take your money. Otherwise, as we can take no further steps in the matter of the prize you will not need to make any mystery of your legacy. Then you can invest it in a more ordinary manner than I have been obliged to suggest to you."

"Oh, you are very cautious, sir," said the woman, who had fancied the business settled. "I did not steal the money, thank the Lord! And you can make every inquiry you wish among the neighbors."

"That is just what I must do, whether or no," said la Peyrade dryly, for he did not altogether like this alert shrewdness, which, under an assumption of artlessness, read all his thoughts. "Prizes for virtue are not given for the asking, and short of being a thief you may not be a Sister of Charity; there is a wide interval between the two extremes."

"As you please, sir," said the woman. "You are doing me too great a service for me to make any demur to your

precautions." And with a most unctuous courtesy she departed, taking her money with her.

"The devil!" thought la Peyrade, "that woman is more than a match for me. She swallows an affront with an air of gratitude and never a wry face. I have not learned to control myself so effectually." He was half afraid that he had been too cautious, and that his client might change her mind before he paid her the call he had promised.

However, the mischief was done, and though a little worried at the thought of having perhaps missed an opportunity, he would sooner have lost a limb than yield to the temptation to call a minute earlier than the hour he had fixed.

The information he picked up in the neighborhood was contradictory; some spoke of his client as a perfect saint, others thought her a very cunning hussy; still, there was nothing on the whole against her moral conduct, or calculated to scare la Peyrade away from the piece of good luck she had put in his way.

When he saw her again at four o'clock she was still in the same mind.

It was with this money in his pocket that he went to the *Rocher de Cancale;* perhaps the various excitement through which he had passed in the course of the day had something to do with the abrupt and hasty way of his rupture with his associates. This manner of behavior was very ill-judged, and not the outcome of either his natural or his acquired temperament. In fact, the money, all hot, that he had in his pocket, had a little turned his brain, and the mere touch of it had filled him with an eager impatience for freedom which was beyond his control. He had thrown Cérizet overboard without even consulting Brigitte; and yet he had not all the courage of his treachery, since he had ascribed to the old maid a purpose which was the offspring solely of his own ill-will, and his bitter memories of entanglements with the man who so long had him in his power.

Thus all through the day la Peyrade had come short of being the infallible and ever-ready man we have hitherto

found him. Once already, when holding the fifteen thousand francs given to him by Thuillier, he had been dragged by Cérizet into an illegal action which had compelled him to the master-stroke of his bargain with Sauvaignou.

It is, no doubt, more difficult to keep a level head in good than in bad fortune.

The Farnese Hercules, strong in quiescence, shows more fully the reserve of muscular force than other figures of Hercules in violent action, represented in all the excitement of their labors.

PART II.

Between the two parts of this narrative, a great event had occurred in the Phellions' life.

Everybody has heard of the disaster of the Odéon, the ill-starred theatre which for so many years devoured its managers. Rightly or wrongly, the residents in the neighborhood of this dramatic failure are convinced that they take the greatest interest in its prosperity, and more than once the mayor and the bigwigs of the arrondissement have endeavored, with a courage that does them honor, to promote various schemes for galvanizing the corpse.

Now, to have a finger in some theatrical pie is one of the perennial ambitions of the middle-class man; hence the would-be saviours of the Odéon, one after another, thought themselves magnificently repaid when they were allowed the semblance of a vote in the management of the concern.

It was as a member of a board of this kind that Minard, as Mayor of the eleventh arrondissement, was appointed president of the Reading Committee, with liberty to select as assessors a certain number of notables of the Quartier Latin.

The reader will ere long be fully informed as to the point reached by la Peyrade in his attempts on Céleste's fortune. It may at once be said that as his schemes advanced towards maturity they had inevitably been talked about; and since at this stage they apparently excluded the pretensions alike of the younger Minard and of Félix the professor, the prejudice which Minard senior had allowed himself to betray against the elder Phellion had been converted into an unequivocal disposition to friendly overtures, for nothing binds and subdues men more effectually than the sense of a common repulse.

Thus seen by eyes unblinded by paternal rivalry, Phellion was to Minard as a noble Roman of unimpeachable integrity, a man whose little books had been adopted by the University—that is to say, a healthy and well-tested mind.

So when it was the Mayor's duty to form a committee for the dramatic custom-house of which he was the head, he immediately chose Phellion; and this noble citizen, on the day when a seat was offered him on that august tribunal, felt as though a fillet of gold crowned his brow. It may well be believed, not lightly nor unadvisedly had so pompous a mortal as Phellion accepted the high and sacred functions proposed to him. He was called, he told himself, to exercise a magistracy, a priesthood.

"To form an opinion of men," said he to Minard, who was surprised at his hesitancy, "is an alarming task: but to judge intellects! Who may conceive himself equal to such a task?"

And, once more, family considerations, that rock ahead of all brave resolve, had encroached on the rights of conscience; the thoughts of the boxes and admissions which would be at the disposal of a member of the board, had given rise to such a commotion in the household, that for a moment his free option had seemed to be in danger. Happily, however, Brutus thought himself justified in deciding on the line of action towards which the consensus of the whole tribe of Phellion was urging him; from the observations made by his son-in-law Barniol, as well as from his personal judgment, he saw reason to believe that by his vote, always to be recorded in favor of works of irreproachable morality, and by his firm determination always to oppose any drama to which a mother might hesitate to take her daughter, he would be enabled to do the most signal service to good principles and public morals.

So Phellion had become a member, to use his own words, of the Areopagus presided over by Minard, and he had just come home from exercising his functions,—as delicate as they were interesting, to quote him once more,—when the

conversation took place which is now to be reported. As being necessary for the apprehension of the subsequent events of this story, and as giving expression to the envious instinct which is one of the salient features of the middle-class nature, this conversation is indispensable in this place.

The committee meeting had been very stormy.

In discussing a tragedy entitled, "The Death of Hercules," the classical and the romantic factions, which the Mayor had carefully balanced in the selection of his jury, had been ready to tear each other's hair.

Twice had Phellion risen to speak, and his colleagues had been amazed at the flood of metaphor a major of the National Guard may have at his command when his literary convictions are threatened.

The votes being taken, victory was declared on the side of which Phellion was the eloquent mouthpiece, and as they went downstairs, he said to Minard:

"We have done good work to-day. This 'Death of Hercules' reminds me of the 'Death of Hector' by poor Luce de Lancival, who died; the piece we have just read is full of sublime lines."

"Yes," said Minard, "the verse is neat enough; there are some good passages, and I confess I place this class of literature a little way above our friend Colleville's anagrams."

"Oh," said Phellion, "Colleville's anagrams are mere playing with words, and have nothing in common with Melpomene's stern accents."

"But I assure you," said Minard, "he attaches great importance to that nonsense; and our friend, the musician, has taken great credit to himself for his anagrams, as well as for many other matters. In fact, since they moved to the neighborhood of the Madeleine, it strikes me that not Colleville only, but his wife, his daughter, the Thuilliers, and their whole set, have given themselves airs of importance, not altogether justifiable."

"What do you expect?" said Phellion. "A man must have

a strong brain to stand the heady fumes of opulence. Our friends have gained great riches by the acquisition of the house they have now gone to live in; we must allow them an interval of intoxication. And, really, the dinner they gave us yesterday, by way of a housewarming, was not only abundant, but well served."

"Well," said Minard, "I may flatter myself that I, too, have given a few fairly distinguished dinners, to men of high position in the state, who have not scorned to sit at my table, but I am not therefore unduly puffed up. What I have always been, I am still."

"You, Monsieur le Maire, have long been accustomed to the handsome mode of life you made for yourself by your remarkable commercial faculties. Our friends, on the contrary, so recently embarked as passengers in the smiling barque of fair fortune, have not yet got their sea-legs, as the phrase is."

And to cut short a conversation, in which the Mayor's tone was to Phellion's mind rather too caustic, he paused to take leave of him. Their way home lay in different directions.

"Are you going through the Luxembourg?" asked Minard, not choosing to lose his companion.

"I shall cross it, but not remain there. I am to meet Madame Phellion at the end of the broad walk, where she is to wait for me with the Barniol children."

"Well, then," said Minard, "I will give myself the pleasure of greeting Madame Phellion, and at the same time breathe a mouthful of fresh air; for even listening to fine things tires the brain, in such work as we have been doing."

Minard had quite understood that Phellion did not meet him half-way in response to his rather acrid remarks on Thuillier's new establishment. So he made no attempt to reopen the subject with him; but when Madame Phellion was his listener, feeling quite sure that his animadversions would find an echo in her, he said:

"Well, lady fair, and what did you think of our dinner yesterday?"

"It was very well done," replied Madame Phellion, "and the moment the *potage à la bisque* was served I perceived that some master-hand such as Chevet had taken the place of the native cook. But it was flat; it lacked the cordiality of our little meetings in the Quartier Latin. And then did it strike you, as it did me, that neither Madame nor Mademoiselle Thuillier seemed thoroughly at home? I declare I felt at last as if I were dining with Madame—what is her name? I cannot get it into my head."

"Torna, Comtesse de Godollo," said Phellion, intervening. "But it is a most euphonious name, too."

"As euphonious as you please, my dear; to my ears it is no name at all."

"It is a Magyar, or, to speak vulgarly, a Hungarian name. Our name, now, if any one chose to quarrel with it, might be said to seem borrowed from the Greek."

"Possibly. But we have the advantage of being well known, not only in our own neighborhood but the whole educational world, where we have succeeded in making an honorable position; whereas, that Hungarian Countess who rules the roast in the Thuilliers' house—where has she dropped from, I should like to know? Why on earth, with her fine-lady airs—for it cannot be denied that the woman has very elegant manners—why, I say, has she thrown herself into the arms of Brigitte, who, between you and me, smells of the sod, and is the porter's daughter to a degree that makes one sick? For my part, I believe that this devoted friend is just an adventuress. She scents a fortune and is plotting some clever way of turning it to advantage."

"Dear me," said Minard, "are you still in ignorance of the beginnings of the intimacy between the Countess and the Thuilliers?"

"She is one of their tenants. She has the entresol below them."

"Very true; but there is something more than that. Zélie, my wife, had it from Joséphine, who, at one time, wanted to enter our service; that fell through, however,

because our Françoise, who was leaving to get married, changed her mind. You must know then, lady fair, that it was owing entirely to Madame de Godollo that the Thuilliers migrated at all, and she, in fact, was their upholsterer and decorator."

"What! an upholsterer!" cried Phellion, "that stylish woman of whom one might truly say: *Incessa patuit dea,* which we very inadequately render by the expression, 'she treads like a queen.'"

"Nay," said Minard, "I do not say that Madame de Godollo actually deals in furniture. But at the time when Mademoiselle Thuillier, by la Peyrade's advice, decided on managing the subletting of the house by the Madeleine, that young gentleman, whose influence is not so paramount as he would like us to believe, could not persuade her, without some strong measure, to go and inhabit the magnificent apartment in her own house, where she received us yesterday. Mademoiselle Brigitte argued that she must alter all her habits,—that her old friends would not come to her in a distant part of town."

"It is perfectly true," said Madame Phellion, "that if we are to be prepared to take a carriage every Sunday, we must have some better amusement in prospect than that we are likely to find in their drawing-room. When you think that, excepting on the evening when they had that little dance in honor of the nomination to the Municipal Council, no one ever dreams of opening the piano!"

"It would indeed have been a pleasure to find such a talent as yours occasionally called into requisition," said Minard, "but that is an idea that would never enter our good Brigitte's head. She would have considered that two more wax-lights would be burning. Five-franc pieces make the music she loves. So, when la Peyrade and Thuillier urged her to leave the apartment in the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, her one idea was the expense attending the removal. She reflected, and very rightly, that the old lumber out of that house would look queer indeed among all that gilt paneling."

"That is how all things hang together," exclaimed Phellion, "and how, beginning at the top of the social scale, luxury, filtering down to the lower classes, involves empires, sooner or later, in ruin."

"There, my dear major, you touch on one of the vexed questions of social economy. On the other hand, many judicious writers are of opinion that luxury is a very important element in the expansion of trade, which is, no doubt, the life of the state. This view, which is not yours, it would seem, is that, at any rate, of Madame de Godollo, for she is said to have furnished her own rooms very daintily; and to tempt Mademoiselle Thuillier into her own elegant courses she made this proposition: 'One of my friends,' said she, 'a Russian princess, for whom one of the decorators in Paris has just made a magnificent suite of furniture, has been suddenly recalled by the Czar, a gentleman who does not understand a joke. So the poor woman is compelled to turn everything she possesses into ready money, and I am sure that she will part with all her furniture for a quarter of what it cost her, to any one who will pay on the nail. It is almost new, and there are some pieces that have never been used.' "

"So then," said Madame Phellion, "all the splendor displayed yesterday is cheap and second-hand magnificence!"

"Just so, madame," answered Minard. "And the thing that brought Mademoiselle Brigitte to the point of accepting this splendid offer, was not so much her wish to acquire new furniture as the idea of securing a great bargain. There is always a vein of Madame la Ressource, in *l'Avare,* in that woman."

"I think you are mistaken, Monsieur le Maire," said Phellion. "Madame la Ressource is a character in *Turcaret,* a very immoral play by Le Sage."

"Do you think so?" said Minard. "Possibly.—What at any rate is quite certain is that while the advocate made his way into Brigitte's good graces by enabling her to buy the house, it was by this jobbery over the furniture that the for-

eign lady gained such a footing. Perhaps, indeed, you may have observed that there is the beginning of a struggle between the two powers—the real and personal estate!"

"Yes, indeed!" cried Madame Phellion, with a sort of glee that showed how interesting she found this conversation. "I observed that the great lady allowed herself to contradict our young friend the lawyer, and that she even did so with some acerbity."

"Oh! it is very marked," replied Minard, "and he is too keen not to be quite aware of it. And her hostility disturbs him not a little. He easily got round the Thuilliers, for, between you and me, they are not very wide-awake; but in her he feels that he has a capable adversary, and he is anxiously seeking her vulnerable point."

"Indeed," said Madame Phellion, "it is just retribution. This gentleman was for some little time modest and humble, but lately he has assumed the most intolerably domineering airs in that house; he flaunted the son-in-law; and really, in the matter of Thuillier's election, he tricked us all by making every one the stepping-stone to his matrimonial ambitions."

"Yes," replied Minard. "But at this moment I can assure you that the man is at a discount. In the first place he cannot every day find an opportunity of enabling his 'dear fellow,' as he calls him, to buy a freehold worth a million francs for a mere song."

"Then did they get the house so very cheap?" asked Madame Phellion.

"They bought it for next to nothing, by means of a rascally intrigue of which Desroches the attorney told me the whole story; as a fact, if the matter came to the knowledge of the Association, it might get our advocate into a very ugly scrape. Now the election to the Chamber lies ahead. Our worthy Thuillier's appetite has grown with eating; still he perceives already that when he tries to cut that cake, Master la Peyrade will not find it so easy to make us his dupes once more. That is why they have attached an ally in the

person of Madame de Godollo, who has high connections, it would seem, in political circles. However, quite apart from this affair, which is still far enough away, the lady is making herself constantly indispensable to Brigitte; for it must be owned that if it were not for the help of the great lady the poor woman in her fine gilded drawing-room would look like a rag in a bride's wedding outfit."

"Oh, Monsieur le Maire, you are too cruel!" said Madame Phellion with a simper.

"Nay, but really and truly," said Minard, "is Brigitte, is Madame Thuillier, in the least capable of presiding over a 'Salon'? The Hungarian lady has superintended all the arrangements of the house; it was she who secured the manservant who is so well trained and so intelligent; it was she who had made out the menu for yesterday's dinner; in short she is the guardian angel of the colony, which, but for her assistance, must have been the laughing-stock of the whole neighborhood.

"And there is one very strange thing: instead of being, as you fancied, a mere parasite like the Provençal, this foreign lady, who seems to have a nice little fortune of her own, it not only disinterested but generous. The dresses worn by Brigitte and by Madame Thuillier, which you ladies all remarked, were a present she insisted on making them; and it was as a result of her having presided in person at the toilet of our two hostesses, that you saw them yesterday not quite such guys as usual."

"But what object can she have in view that she shows them such maternal devotion?" asked Madame Phellion.

"My dear," said Phellion solemnly, "human actions are not, thank God! invariably based on selfish motives and the promptings of greedy interest. There are yet some hearts to be found who love doing good for its own sake. This lady may have seen that our friends were likely to lose their way in a sphere of which they did not appreciate the height; and, having guided their first steps to the purchase of the furniture, she may, as a foster-mother gets attached to her

charge, have found pleasure in giving them the milk of information and advice."

"Your dear husband!" said Minard to Madame Phellion. "You would think he meant no harm, and he bites the piece out!"

"I—bite a piece out!" said Phellion. "I did not intend it, nor is it consonant to my habits."

"And yet you could hardly put it more plainly that the Thuilliers are perfect fools and that Madame de Godollo has volunteered to bring them up by hand."

"I decline to accept, on behalf of our friends, an interpretation so derogatory to their high respectability," replied Phellion. "All I meant to imply was that perhaps they lack experience, and that this noble lady places her knowledge of the world and its ways at their disposal; but I protest against any attribution of meaning beyond the idea thus strictly defined."

"Still, my dear major, you must admit that there would be something more than want of worldly wisdom in allowing this la Peyrade to marry Céleste. It would be at once stupid and immoral; for, after all, the advocate's barefaced flirtation with Madame Colleville——"

"Monsieur le Maire," said Phellion, with aggravated pomposity, "Solon, the great lawgiver, would assign no punishment for parricide, believing the crime to be impossible. I think the same of such gross misconduct as you seem to allude to. That Madame Colleville should favor the attentions of Monsieur de le Peyrade while meaning to give him her daughter—no, monsieur, no! That is beyond my imagining. If she were questioned on the subject before a tribunal, Madame Colleville, like Marie Antoinette, could but reply, 'I appeal to all mothers!'"

"At the same time, my dear," said his wife, "allow me to tell you that Madame Colleville is abominably profligate, and has very sufficiently proved it."

"Enough of this, my dear," said Phellion. "Indeed, it is near the dinner hour, and it seems to me that by degrees

we have allowed the conversation to drift on to the mud-banks of slander."

"You are full of illusions, my dear friend," said Minard, shaking hands with Phellion; "but they are honorable illusions, and I honor you. Madame, I have the honor——" added the Mayor, bowing respectfully to Madame Phellion.

And they went their ways.

The information supplied by the worthy Mayor of the eleventh arrondissement was correct.

In the Thuillier's drawing-room, since their migration to the Madeleine quarter, the face and figure of a bewitchingly gracious woman was to be found between Brigitte's asperity and Madame Thuillier's plaintive indolence, giving the place an unexpected stamp of elegance.

It was also true that by this woman's instrumentality Brigitte had effected an investment in furniture not less advantageous and far more legitimate than the purchase of the freehold. For six thousand francs she had found herself in possession of a set of furniture not long since in the workshops, and representing a value of at least thirty thousand francs.

It was no less true that in consequence of this service, which went straight to her heart, the old maid had shown the handsome foreigner a great deal of the respectful deference which her citizen class, in spite of its touchiness and jealousy, is far more ready to pay to titles and high rank in the social hierarchy than is generally supposed. The Hungarian Countess was a woman of great tact and superior education, and while she assumed the tone of lofty control which she thought fit to arrogate over the three persons she chose to patronize, she took good care not to give her influence any taint of irritating or imperious authority. On the contrary, she flattered Brigitte's conceit of being a model housekeeper, and, so far as the material expenses of her own house were concerned, she affected to consult *Miss* Thuillier, as she called her by way of a pet name; so that while she

reserved the administration of the sumptuary outlay in her own and her neighbors' rooms, she appeared to be giving and taking useful instruction rather than asserting her patronage.

Even la Peyrade himself could make no mistake as to the fact that his influence was waning before that of the Countess. But this lady's antagonism was not limited to a mere struggle for pre-eminence. She had boldly expressed her disapproval of his pretensions to Céleste's hand; she extended her protection in the plainest way to Félix the professor's suit; and Minard, who had not failed to discern this, had taken good care not to mention the fact to those whom it most interested, while expatiating on other details.

Théodose was no doubt all the more distressed at finding himself undermined by a hostility which to him seemed inexplicable, because he was conscious of having helped to get this troublesome adversary into the heart of the citadel.

His first blunder had been his rash indulgence in the barren satisfaction of keeping Cérizet out of his lease; if Brigitte had not, by his advice and entreaties, undertaken the subletting on her own account, the odds were that she would never have come near Madame de Godollo.

Another rash act had been to urge the Thuilliers to leave their remote solitude in the Quartier Latin.

But at that time, the blossoming time of his power over them, Théodose believed that his marriage was a settled thing, and he was in an almost childish hurry to take his flight towards the superior sphere which seemed to be opening before him. So he had added his persuasions to those of the Hungarian Countess, feeling as though he were sending the Thuilliers on in advance to make his bed in the handsome apartment he was one day to share with them. And he had foreseen another advantage from this arrangement; it would remove Céleste from the almost daily meetings with a rival whom he could but regard as dangerous. Beyond the distance which made it possible "to drop in," Félix could call but seldom; and Théodose would find easier

opportunity for lowering him in the opinion of Céleste, who had given him a place in her heart only on condition of his affording her such satisfaction on religious points as had found him refractory.

Still, more than one obstacle had arisen in the way of the Provençal's plans.

If la Peyrade should open wider horizons to the Thuilliers, he would run the risk of introducing rival competitors for the exclusive admiration of which he was now the object. In the provincial atmosphere they breathed, for lack of any standard of comparison, Brigitte and the "dear fellow" had placed Théodose on an eminence from which he must inevitably be dislodged when seen in juxtaposition with other types of superiority and fashion. Thus, irrespective of the shock obscurely dealt by Madame de Godollo, the idea of establishing the transpontine colony was a bad one so far as the Thuilliers were concerned, and not much better with regard to the Collevilles.

This family had moved with their friends to the new house, renting the entresol at the back, at a price within their means. Colleville, however, complained that the rooms were dark and stuffy, and being compelled to go every day from the Boulevard de la Madeleine to the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, where his office was, he grumbled at the new arrangements to which he was a victim, and was apt to express his opinion that la Peyrade was a perfect tyrant. Madame Colleville, on the other hand, in order to be on a par with the other inhabitants of the quarter where she had taken up her residence, rushed into a perfect orgy of new bonnets, mantles, and dresses; and these, necessitating extra cheques, led to more or less stormy scenes in the household.

Céleste, to be sure, had fewer opportunities of seeing young Phellion, but then there was less chance of her being led into religious discussions; and absence, which endangers none but weak attachments, made her think more tenderly and less theologically of the man of her dreams.

And all those blunders after all were as nothing as com-

pared with another source of humiliation which weighed on Théodose. For the sum of ten thousand francs, which Thuillier had disbursed with a very good grace, la Peyrade had promised him, within a week, the Cross of the Legion of Honor, the secret ambition of his whole life.

Now more than two months had elapsed and not a word had been heard of the glorious bauble; and the ex-second clerk, who would have been so happy in displaying his scrap of red ribbon on the Boulevard de la Madeleine, where he paced the asphalt with assiduous regularity, still had but a flower to grace his buttonhole, the privilege of all men, of which he was much less proud than Béranger.

La Peyrade had of course alluded darkly to some unforeseen and unaccountable obstacle which had paralyzed all the efforts and all the good-will of the Comtesse du Bruel; but Thuillier did not take this explanation kindly, and in his acute disappointment he was often within an ace of saying, like Chicaneau in *Les Plaideurs:* "Then give me back the money!" However, he did not come to this point because la Peyrade kept a hold over him through the famous pamphlet on "Taxation and Redemption." The fuss of removal had hindered its completion. While all that excitement was in the air Thuillier could not give his mind to the correction of the proofs, which, it may be remembered, he reserved the right to criticise minutely.

The lawyer, clearly understanding that he must strike some decisive blow to restore his fast-evaporating influence, seized on this haggling mood to be the fulcrum, as he hoped, of a scheme no less deep-laid than bold.

One day, when they were at work on the last pages of the pamphlet, a discussion arose over the word *nepotism,* which Thuillier wished to eliminate from a sentence written by la Peyrade, declaring he had never met with it, and that it was a *neologism,* that is to say, in the literary notions of the middle-class man, almost as bad as the idea of 1793 and the Reign of Terror. As a rule Théodose took his "dear fellow's" ridiculous notions patiently enough; but that morning he

got very angry, informing Thuillier that he might finish the work himself, since he chose to criticise it with such acumen and intelligence; and for a few days they did not meet.

At first Thuillier supposed this to mean merely a passing fit of temper; but as time went on and la Peyrade did not return, he felt that he must take some steps towards a reconciliation, so he called on the Provençal to apologize and put an end to this fit of the sulks. Wishing, however, to give this action such a turn as would leave a loophole for his self-respect, he went in with an off-hand air and said:

"I find, my dear boy, that we were both in the right. *Nepotism* means the authority assumed by the Pope's nephews in the direction of the State. I looked in the dictionary and that is the only meaning given; but from what Phellion tells me it would seem that in political parlance the meaning of the word has been extended to include the influence exercised illegally by the connivance of corrupt ministers. So I believe the expression may stand, though it is not used in that sense by Napoléon Landais."

La Peyrade, who, while receiving his visitor, affected to be absorbed in the arrangement of his papers, merely shrugged his shoulders and said nothing.

"Well," said Thuillier, "have you looked at the proofs of the last two sheets?—for we really must get on."

"If you have sent nothing to the printers," replied la Peyrade, "we are not likely to get proofs. So far as I am concerned, I have not touched the manuscript."

"But, my dear Théodose, you cannot have your back up, surely, for such a trifle. I do not pretend to be a skilled writer; only, as I put my name to the thing, I think I may be allowed an opinion as to a word."

"But *Môsieu* Phellion," retorted the lawyer, "is an author; and since you consult him, I do not see why you should not ask him to help you to finish the work, on which, I promise you, I will not touch another line."

"Good heavens! What a temper!" cried Thuillier. "Now you are in a rage because I ventured to doubt the use of an

expression, and took another opinion. But you knew perfectly well that I had read part of it to Phellion, Colleville, Minard, and Barniol, as if the work were my own, to judge of its effect on the public, and that is no reason why I should sign my name to anything they might choose to write. To give you an idea of the confidence I have in you: Madame de Godollo, to whom I was reading a few pages of it last evening, told me that the pamphlet was quite enough to get me into trouble with the public prosecutor; and do you suppose that would stop me?"

"Indeed," said la Peyrade sarcastically, "the oracle of your household seems to me very far-sighted, and I have no wish to bring your head to the block."

"All that is pure nonsense," said Thuillier. "Do you or do you not intend to leave me in the lurch?"

"Literary questions," replied the lawyer, "lead to quarrels between the best friends even more often than political differences. I wish to eliminate every subject of debate between us."

"But, my dear Théodose, I never set up for being a man of letters; I believe I am possessed of vulgar common sense, and I say what I mean. You cannot blame me for that, and if you play me such a scurvy trick as to refuse me your help, it must certainly be because something else rankles of which I am wholly unconscious."

"Why a scurvy trick? Nothing can be easier for you than not to write the pamphlet; you will still be Jérôme Thuillier as you are now."

"But it was you who were of opinion that this publication might contribute to my election to the Chamber. Besides, as I tell you, I have read portions of it to all our friends. I have spoken of the pamphlet in the Municipal Council, and if it now fails to appear I shall be discredited; it will be said that the Government has bribed me."

"You have only to say that you are the friend of the incorruptible Phellion; that will be a sufficient answer. You might even marry Céleste to his nincompoop of a son. Such

a connection would protect you even better against any suspicions."

"Théodose," said Thuillier, "there is something on your mind which you will not tell me. It is not in nature that you shall involve your friend in such loss of respect for a simple matter of one word."

"Well, yes, then, if you will have it," said la Peyrade, with an air of effort; "I cannot bear ingratitude."

"Nor can I," said Thuillier, with some spirit. "And if you mean that you accuse me of anything so mean and vile, I demand an explanation. We must at last speak out! What have you to complain of? Of what do you accuse me—the man whom, but a few days since, you called your friend?"

"Nothing—and everything," said Théodose; "your sister and you are far too clever to quarrel openly with a man who has put a million francs in your pockets at the risk of his good name. But I am not so simple but that I can understand shades of meaning. There are persons about you who are making it their business to undermine me, and Brigitte's one idea is to discover some decent excuse for not keeping her promises. Men such as I do not urge this kind of claim, and I certainly have no wish to force myself on anybody; but I confess I was far from expecting such treatment."

"Come, come," said Thuillier, seeing in the lawyer's eye the glitter of a tear, which completely deceived him; "I am sure I do not know what Brigitte may have done, but one thing is certain, I have never ceased to be your sincerest friend."

"Oh, no," said la Peyrade; "since I failed in the matter of the Cross, I am of no further use but to throw to the dogs. And can I, do you suppose, make head against occult powers? Why, dear me! It is, perhaps, this very pamphlet—of which you have talked too much by a great deal—which annoys the Government, and hinders your being promoted. The ministry are such owls that they would rather wait to have their hand forced by the success of the work, than yield gracefully and reward you simply for past services. But

these are political mysteries which are not likely to occur to your sister's mind."

"Deuce take it!" said Thuillier. "I fancy I am pretty clear-sighted, and really I cannot see that Brigitte has changed in her treatment of you."

"Most true!" said la Peyrade. "Your sight is so keen that you do not even see that Madame de Godollo always at her heels, and that she cannot live without her!"

"So!" said Thuillier, enlightened, "we are suffering from a little fit of jealousy."

"Jealousy!" retorted la Peyrade. "I do not know that it is quite the right word. But, at any rate, your sister, who is not at all above the common run, and whom you, a man of such superior intellect, have allowed to usurp the authority she enjoys and abuses——"

"How can I help it, my dear boy?" interrupted Thuillier, inhaling the compliment, "she is so absolutely devoted to me."

"Such weakness is very pardonable," said Théodose, "still, I repeat it, your sister is no match for your little finger. Well, as I was saying, when a man of such intelligence as you will, I am sure, allow me, does her the honor to advise her and serve her as zealously as I have done, it cannot be pleasant for him to see himself cut out, supplanted in her confidence, by a woman fallen from heaven knows where, and all on account of some frippery curtains and old chairs she was able to buy cheap."

"With women, as you know," said Thuillier, "household economy is paramount."

"And I may tell you that Brigitte, who meddles in everything, also imagines that she can rule our love affairs with a high hand. Since you are so clear-sighted, you must have observed that in Brigitte's mind nothing is less settled than my marriage to Mademoiselle Colleville. And yet my affection has been solemnly authorized by you."

"Yes, and by heaven," said Thuillier, "I should like to see anybody try to meddle with our arrangements."

"Setting Brigitte aside," replied the lawyer, "I can tell you of some one who is quite determined to meddle, and that is Mademoiselle Céleste herself. In spite of the apparent barrier between them, in their difference of opinion on religious questions, her head is very candidly full of that young Phellion."

"And why not insist on Flavie's setting that to rights?"

"Flavie, my dear fellow! No one knows what she is better than you. She is the woman rather than the mother. I found myself let in for a little mild love-making; and though she approves of the marriage, you understand she has not set her heart on it."

"Very well," said Thuillier, "then I will take it upon myself to speak to Céleste. It shall not be said that we were beaten by a little girl."

"On no account," cried la Peyrade; "I particularly wish that you should not interfere in this matter. Excepting as regards your sister, you have a will of iron, and I will not have it said that you forced Céleste into my arms. On the contrary, I wish the child to be left sole mistress of her heart; only I think I have a right to ask that she should decide definitely between me and Monsieur Félix, for I really cannot remain in this suspense, which is undermining me. That the marriage should be hung up till you are elected deputy is too vague; I cannot submit to see the most important step of my life left to the chances of the future; besides, this arrangement, to which I gave in at first, has the smell of a bargain about it which I do not at all like.

"I feel that I must tell you a secret; a confidence to which I am driven by all the difficulties I am exposed to. Dutocq can tell you that before you left the house in Rue Saint-Dominique, an heiress was proposed to me, in his presence, quite seriously, with a larger fortune than you can leave to Mademoiselle Colleville. I refused—because I am fool enough to have lost my heart, and because a connection with so respectable a family as yours seems to me supremely desirable. Still, Brigitte must be made to understand that, even if Céleste throws me over, I am not left destitute."

"That I can easily believe," said Thuillier. "But to leave the whole decision to that little brain—especially if, as you say, she has a fancy for Félix!"

"That I cannot consider," said the lawyer. "At any cost I must escape from the present predicament—it is intolerable, so far as I am concerned. You talk of your pamphlet, I am incapable of finishing it. You, as a man who have known something of women, must be well aware of the dominion the malignant creatures can exert over our life and being."

"Yes indeed!" said Thuillier fatuously. "I have been a lover; but I have not often been a slave; I have taken some and left others."

"But I, with my southern temperament, am a prey to passion; besides, Céleste has a greater charm than the mere success of winning favors. Brought up as she has been by you, under your eye, she is an adorable girl; but it is folly to have allowed that young fellow, who is in every respect unsuitable, to take possession of her fancy."

"You are right ten times over. But they have been intimate from their childhood; Félix and she played together, and you only appeared on the scene at a later date. In fact, it is a proof of our high opinion of you, that as soon as you came we were ready to give up our old plans."

"You were, yes," said Théodose. "You, with literary ideas and proclivities,—often full of brilliant wit and good sense,—have a heart of gold. With you I know where I stand, and you know what you want; but you will see, if you say a word to Brigitte about hastening on this marriage, she will fight tooth and nail."

"I believe firmly that Brigitte has always wished to see you her son-in-law, if I may so express myself; but if she does not, I beg you to rest assured that in matters of importance I can assert my will. Only let us be sure exactly what it is that you want. Then we will start,—left, right,—and you will see all will be well."

"I want, in the first place," said la Peyrade, "to put the

finishing touches to your pamphlet, for you must be my first consideration."

"Certainly," said Thuillier; "it would not do to be wrecked in sight of land."

"Well, then. Starting from the idea that I am annihilated, overthrown by the thought of this marriage which remains hung up, I tell you you will not get a page out of me, by hook or by crook, till the question is settled."

"And what is the question; how do you formulate it?" asked Thuillier.

"Obviously, if Céleste decides against me, I must wish to know my fate at once. If it is my fate to marry, for 'reason,' at least I ought not to miss the opportunity of which I have spoken."

"Very good. And how much time do you give us?"

"It seems to me that any girl may know her own mind in the course of a fortnight."

"Beyond a doubt. But I do not like the idea of Céleste's pronouncing sentence without appeal."

"I will take my chance. I shall be released from suspense, which is the most important point; and then, between you and me, I am not staking so rashly as you might think. It is not in a fortnight that a son of Phellion's, that is to say, obstinacy incarnate in folly, will get over his philosophic doubts; and Céleste will certainly not accept him for her husband till he has given proofs of conversion."

"That is highly probable. But supposing Céleste were to temporize, and would not decide on either alternative?"

"That is your business," said the Provençal. "I do not know what parental authority may be in Paris, but I do know that in our good town of Avignon and those parts I never heard of a little girl being allowed such liberty. If you, and your sister,—granting that she plays fair,—and a father and mother, cannot among you make a child, on whom you are bestowing a fortune, agree to a request so simple and reasonable as that she should freely choose between two suitors—good-morning! You must write over the door of your house that Céleste is queen and sovereign."

"We have not quite come to that," said Thuillier, with a competent air.

"As to you, old fellow, I must put you off till Céleste has made up her mind. Then, for good or for ill, I will set to work, and in three days it will be finished."

"At any rate," said Thuillier, "I know what you have on your mind. I will talk it over with Brigitte."

"That is but a lame conclusion," said la Peyrade. "However, so matters stand, unfortunately."

"What do you mean?"

"I should, as you may suppose, prefer to be told that the matter is settled. But old creases cannot be smoothed out."

"What then! Do you imagine that I am a man devoid of will and independence?"

"No. But I should like to be in a corner to see how you will open the question with your sister."

"I shall open it very frankly, and a very determined *I will* shall settle every objection."

"Oh, my dear old fellow," said la Peyrade, slapping him on the shoulder, "since the time of Chrysale, in *Les Femmes Savantes,* how much warlike thunder has lowered its tone before the will of a woman accustomed to domineer!"

"That remains to be seen," said Thuillier, effecting a stage exit.

His anxiety to see the pamphlet finished, and the doubts so ingeniously hinted as to the inflexibility of his will, had turned him into a raging tiger. He went away in the mood to put the whole household to fire and sword, if his will were defied.

As soon as he was at home, he attacked Brigitte on the subject. She, with her crude good sense and selfishness, pointed out to him that by thus hurrying forward the time originally fixed for la Peyrade's marriage, they were very foolishly disarming themselves; they could not feel certain that, when the election should take place, the lawyer would still devote himself with zeal to insuring their success. "It

would be the Legion of Honor over again," said the old maid.

"There is a difference," replied Thuillier. "The Cross does not depend directly on la Peyrade, whereas he can make what use he pleases of the influence he has acquired in the twelfth arrondissement."

"And if it should be his pleasure," retorted Brigitte, "when we have set him on his feet, to use it for himself—the fellow is ambitious."

This danger did, indeed, strike the hopeful candidate; still, he fancied there was some guarantee in la Peyrade's moral sense.

"The man has not a delicate sense of honor," said Brigitte, "who comes to force a bargain on you; and this way of making us dance on our hind-legs like poodles, for a lump of sugar, before giving you the end of your pamphlet, does not please me at all. Could you not get Phellion to help you, and be rid of Théodose? Or else, now I think of it, Madame de Godollo, who knows all the political world, could no doubt find you a journalist. They are all out at elbows, I have heard! for twenty crowns the thing would be done."

"And my secret," said Thuillier, "would be known to three or four persons. No; I positively need la Peyrade; he feels it, and can dictate terms. And, after all, we promised he should marry Céleste; it is forestalling it by a year at most—a year?—a few months, a few weeks only, perhaps; the King may dissolve the Chamber at the moment when no one expects it."

"But if Céleste will have nothing to say to him," Brigitte suggested.

"Céleste! Céleste, indeed!" cried Thuillier. "She must do what is required of her. That should have been thought of before we pledged ourselves to la Peyrade; for, after all, we have given him our word. And are we not giving the child a choice between him and Phellion?"

"So that if Céleste should decide in favor of Félix," said the sceptical Brigitte, "you would still believe in la Peyrade's devotion to you?"

"What can I do? These are his conditions. Besides, the rascal has calculated closely. He knows that Félix will never make up his mind to bring the girl a certificate of confession, and that, short of that, the little slut will never accept him as her husband. La Peyrade's game is a very clever one."

"Much too clever," said Brigitte. "However, settle the business as you choose. I will have nothing to do with it; all these roundabout ways are not to my taste."

Thuillier next saw Madame Colleville, and intimated to her that she was to communicate to Céleste the plans that depended on her.

Céleste had never been officially authorized to indulge her inclinations with regard to Félix Phellion. On the contrary, at an earlier stage of affairs, Flavie had expressly forbidden her to give the young professor any hope; still, as she felt herself supported by Madame Thuillier, her godmother, the sole recipient of her confidence, she gently let herself glide, without particularly troubling herself as to the difficulties that might some day stand in the way of her choice. Consequently, when she was commanded to decide between Félix and Théodose, the guileless girl saw only one side of the alternative, and fancied that she had gained an immense advantage by an arrangement which left her free to dispose of herself in obedience to the impulse of her heart.

But la Peyrade had not been mistaken when he reckoned on the young girl's religious intolerance on one hand, and, on the other, on Phellion's philosophic obduracy, as invincible obstacles to their engagement.

On the very evening of the day when Flavie had received instructions to communicate to Céleste the sovereign will of Thuillier, the Phellions came to spend the evening with Brigitte, and a lively encounter took place between these two young people. Mademoiselle Colleville did not need the warning hinted by her mother that it would be highly indelicate to introduce into her controversial arguments any reference to the conditional approbation vouchsafed to their affection. Céleste was at once too honorable and too fervently

religious to wish that the man she loved should owe his conversion to any motive but conviction.

The evening was spent in theological discussions, and love is so strange a Proteus and can assume such undreamed-of shapes, that he figured that evening in the black robe and beretta with far better grace than might be supposed. Still Phellion *fils* was extraordinarily ill-starred in this encounter, of which he knew not the importance. Besides yielding nothing, he affected a light and ironical tone, and put poor Céleste at last into such a frenzy of distress that she conveyed to him her wish that all should be at an end, and that he should never speak to her again.

In such a case a lover of more experience would have seen her again the next morning, for two hearts are never nearer to a mutual understanding than when they have agreed to the necessity of an eternal parting. But this law is not to be found in a table of logarithms, and Félix, quite incapable of divining it, believed himself seriously and forever forbidden her presence; in fact, during the whole fortnight granted the girl for mature deliberation (as the French code has it in certain questions of inheritance), though Céleste was expecting him every day and every minute, and thinking no more of la Peyrade than if he had nothing to do with the matter, the pitiable youth never had the remotest thought of breaking the ban.

Fortunately for this uninspired lover, a benevolent fairy was keeping guard over him, and this was what happened on the day before that on which Céleste was to pronounce her decision.

It was a Sunday, on which day the Thuilliers still held their weekly receptions.

Madame Phellion, fully convinced that the system of greasing the cook's palm, or, as the French say, "making the basket dance," is often the ruin of a prosperous household, was in the habit of going to market herself at the shops whence she supplied herself. From time immemorial in the Phellion family Sunday was sacred to the pot-au-feu (the stewed

beef that is a standing dish in French households), and the great citizen's wife in the carefully shabby attire affected by ladies when they go marketing, had come back very prosaically from the butcher's, followed by the cook, who carried in her basket a noble cut of fresh top-side of beef. Twice already had she rung at her door, and a terrific storm was gathering to fall on the head of the boy who by his delay was placing his mistress in a far worse predicament than that of Louis XIV., who was only *almost* kept waiting. In her furious impatience, Madame Phellion had just given the bell a third and violent pull. Imagine her confusion and disturbance when at this very moment a small coupé came rattling up to the main door of the house, she saw a lady step out, and in this untimely and unlooked-for caller she recognized the elegant Countess Torna de Godollo.

The unhappy housewife, blushing purple, lost her head and plunged headlong into apologies; she would no doubt have aggravated her already painful position, but that happily Phellion, startled by the repeated peals of the bell, came out of his study robed in his dressing-gown and crowned with a smoking-cap, to see what was the matter.

After a speech of which the pompous grace went far towards compensating for the costume it was intended to excuse, the citizen, with the calm presence of mind that never deserted him, gallantly offered his arm to the fair foreigner, and, having led her into the drawing-room, began:

"May I without indiscretion ask you, Madame la Comtesse, to what we owe the unexpected honor of this visit?"

"I was anxious," said the Hungarian lady, "to speak with Madame Phellion of a matter she must have much at heart. I never have a chance of seeing her alone; so, though indeed we are hardly acquainted, I made so bold as to seek her here."

"Nay, indeed, madame, you do our humble dwelling honor. But what has become of Madame Phellion?" the good man impatiently added, and he went to the door.

"No, I entreat you," said the Countess, "do not disturb her. I have come clumsily enough just at an inconvenient

moment for her household arrangements. Brigitte is beginning to train me very well, and I know that the cares of a house-mistress ought to be respected. And, after all, I am not to be pitied; I have the consolation of your company, on which I had not ventured to count."

Before Phellion could reply to this amiable speech, Madame Phellion came in; a cap with smart bows had taken the place of her market-bonnet and an ample shawl covered the other defects of her morning attire. As his wife came in, Phellion was about to withdraw.

"Monsieur Phellion," said the Countess, "you will not be in the way at the conference I have sought with madame. On the contrary, your admirable judgment can only be valuable in throwing light on a subject in which you are as deeply interested as your excellent wife; it is the marriage of your son."

"Of my son!" echoed Madame Phellion, with great amazement; "why, I did not know that anything of the kind was just now under discussion."

"That Monsieur Félix should marry Céleste, is, I fancy, a thing you wish, if not actually a project?" said the Countess.

"We have taken no definite steps to that end, madame," said Phellion.

"I know that—only too well," replied the Hungarian lady, "for, on the contrary, every member of your family seems to be doing their utmost to counteract my efforts. However, one thing is clear, and that is, that in spite of all the silence, and I may say quite plainly, all the clumsiness, that has attended this business, the two young people love each other and will be greatly to be pitied if they are not united. It is to avert that disaster that I have taken the step of calling on you this morning."

"We cannot but be deeply touched, madame, by the interest you are so kind as to feel in our boy's happiness; but, to tell the truth, that interest——"

"Is so inexplicable," the lady hastily put in, "that it rouses your suspicions?"

"Oh! madame," said Phellion, with a respectfully deprecating bow.

"Bless me," said the Hungarian, "the explanation is extremely simple. I have studied Céleste, and in that sweet and artless child I can discern a moral steadfastness which would make me greatly regret her being sacrificed."

"Indeed it is true, madame. Céleste is an angel of sweetness."

"As regards Monsieur Félix, I venture to feel an interest in him, for I see in him the worthy son of a most virtuous father——"

"Madame, spare me!" said Phellion, with another low bow.

"But he also has, in my eyes, the charm of that shyness of true love which may be seen in all his looks and heard in his speech. We women find infinite delight in seeing the passion under an aspect which threatens no disappointment, no disillusions."

"My son, to be sure, is not showy," said Madame Phellion, with a hardly perceptible touch of rancor. "He is not a young man of fashion."

"But he has more essential qualities," the Countess went on, "merit unconscious of itself, the crown of intellectual superiority."

"Really, madame," said Phellion, "you compel us to hear things——"

"Which are not in excess of the truth," interrupted the Countess. "Another reason which leads me to exert myself for the happiness of these two young people is that I have no interest whatever in that of Monsieur de la Peyrade, who is false and avaricious. That man hopes to build up the success of his inveigling schemes on the ruins of their happiness."

"There can be no doubt," said Phellion, "that there are impenetrable depths in Monsieur de la Peyrade on which it is difficult to cast a gleam of light."

"And as it is my misfortune," Madame de Godollo went on,

"to have a man of that character for a husband, the mere thought of all the misery in store for Céleste under such an unhappy union inspired me, for her sake, with the charitable impulse which now I hope has ceased to surprise you."

"We did not need such conclusive explanations as you have given us to throw light on your conduct, madame," said Phellion. "But with regard to the blunders by which we have nullified your generous efforts, I must own that, with a view to preserving us from repeating them, it might be as well if you would point them out to us."

"How long is it, for instance," said the Countess, "since any member of your family set foot in the Thuilliers' house?"

"Well, if I remember rightly," said Phellion, "we were there on the Sunday after the house-warming dinner."

"Yes, a full fortnight!" said the lady. "And do you suppose that nothing happens in a fortnight?"

"Certainly, much may happen, since in 1830 it took only three days to overthrow a perjured dynasty and found the order of things under which we now live."

"You see," said Madame de Godollo. "Well, and that evening, did nothing pass between Céleste and your son?"

"Indeed, they had a most painful explanation on the matter of my son's religious views. For it must be owned that good little Céleste, who is in every other respect a charming creature, is somewhat fanatical on the question of piety."

"That I grant," said the Countess. "But she has been brought up by such a mother—as you know. She has never seen the face of true piety, only its mask. Repentant Magdalens of the type of Madame Colleville always insist on pretending to live in a desert with a death's head for company. They fancy it impossible to be saved on cheaper terms. But, after all, what was it that Céleste asked of Monsieur Félix? That he should read the *Imitation of Christ*."

"He had read it, madame," said Phellion, "he considers it a very well written book; but his convictions, unfortunately, have not been even shaken by reading it."

"And do you think it skilful of him not to have been able to yield one jot of his inflexible convictions to his lady love?"

"My son, madame, never had from me the least training in such skill; honesty and good faith are the principles I endeavored to inculcate."

"It does not seem to me, monsieur, that a man is false to his honor when, in dealing with a perverse mood, he goes a little out of his way to avoid irritating it. However, admitting that Monsieur Félix owed it to his self-respect to be the iron wall against which Céleste's entreaties beat in vain; was that a reason, after this scene—which was not the first of the kind, though it was by way of being final—that, when he had the chance of meeting her in Brigitte's drawing-room, which is neutral ground, he should sulk in his tents for a fortnight? Above all, that he should crown this fit of temper by a proceeding which is quite beyond my comprehension, and which, having just come to our knowledge, has filled Céleste at once with despair and with a feeling of extreme indignation?"

"Can my son have been capable of any such proceeding? Impossible, madame!" cried Phellion. "What it is I know not, but I cannot hesitate to say that you must have been misinformed."

"And yet nothing can be more certain. Young Colleville, who to-day has an *exeat,* has just told us that for more than a week Monsieur Félix, who has latterly been coming to give him his lesson every alternate day, with the greatest punctuality, has entirely ceased to come near him. Now, unless your son is ill, I cannot help saying that this is to the last degree ill-judged. In the position in which he stood to the sister, he should rather have given the boy two lessons a day, than select such a moment for withdrawing his help."

The Phellions, husband and wife, looked at each other as if in consultation as to their reply.

"My son, madame," said Madame Phellion, "is not exactly ill; but since you lead us to speak, by telling us of this

fact,—which is, I must own, most extraordinary and utterly unlike his character and habit of mind,—I must confess that since the day when Céleste seemed to convey that all was at end between them, Félix has been in a very strange state of mind. Monsieur Phellion and I are much worried about it."

"Yes, madame," Phellion added, "the young man is certainly not himself."

"What, then, ails him?" asked the Countess, with much interest.

"In the first place," said Phellion, "that evening, after the scene, my son, on his return home, shed burning tears on his mother's shoulder, giving us to understand that his happiness was ruined for life."

"So far all is natural enough," said Madame de Godollo; "lovers always see the darkest side of everything."

"No doubt," said Madame Phellion; "but from that moment Félix has never even remotely alluded to his misfortune, and on the following day he threw himself into his studies again with a sort of frenzy; do you think that equally natural?"

"Even that may be accounted for. Study is said to be a great comforter."

"Nothing can be more true," observed Phellion. "But in all my son's appearance and conduct there is a touch of excitement, and at the same time an intensity of concentration, that you can scarcely conceive of. If you speak to the youth, he seems not to hear; he sits down to the table and forgets to eat; or takes his food with such indifference as the medical faculty considers very bad for the digestion; he has to be reminded of his ordinary duties and regular occupations, and he is generally regularity itself. Then, the other day, while he was at the Observatory, where he now spends every evening, never coming in till very late, I took upon myself to go into his room and look over his papers. I was appalled, madame, at finding a note-book full of algebraical calcula-

tions which seemed to me to extend beyond the powers of the human intellect."

"Perhaps he is on the track of some grand problem," said the Countess.

"Or on the road to madness," said Madame Phellion, with a sigh, and lowering her voice.

"That is hardly likely," said Madame de Godollo; "a man of such a calm temperament and sound good sense is not liable to such disaster. But I know of a misfortune far more imminent, between this and to-morrow, if we cannot effect a master-stroke this evening. Céleste may indeed be lost to him forever."

"How is that?" asked the parents, in a breath.

"Perhaps you are not aware," the lady went on, "that Thuillier and his sister definitely pledged themselves to promote a marriage between Céleste and Monsieur de la Peyrade?"

"We had our suspicions," replied Madame Phellion.

"Still, the fulfilment of the bargain was fixed for a somewhat remote date, and contingent on certain conditions. Monsieur de la Peyrade, after securing them the possession of their new house, was to obtain for Monsieur Thuillier the Cross of the Legion of Honor, to write a political pamphlet in his name, and to conduct an election by which he was to win a seat in the Chamber of Deputies. It was like a romance of chivalry in which the hero, to obtain the hand of the princess, was required to exterminate a dragon."

"The Countess is very witty," said Madame Phellion to her husband, who signed to her not to interrupt.

"I have not time," the Countess went on, "nor is it of any use to expatiate on the tricks by which Monsieur de la Peyrade has managed to hurry matters to a conclusion. What it is important that you should know is this: by his contrivance, Céleste has been compelled to make a final choice between him and Monsieur Félix. The poor child was given a fortnight in which to decide; the time is up to-morrow, and in consequence of the disastrous effect on her mind, pro-

duced by your son's attitude and conduct, there is very real danger that she may sacrifice her best feelings and instincts to the evil promptings of her outraged affections."

"But what is to be done, madame?" asked Phellion.

"Fight it out, monsieur. Come in full force this evening to the Thuilliers' persuade Monsieur Félix to accompany you, lecture him well, and make him yield a little of the rigidity of his philosophical opinions. 'Paris is worth a Mass,' said Henri IV.; at any rate, let him avoid such questions. Surely, his heart can supply him with accents that may appeal to the woman who loves him, and that is a long stride towards her thinking him in the right. I shall be there. I will help him to the utmost of my power; and perhaps, on the spur of the moment, I may hit on some means of making my support effective. One thing is certain, a great battle must be fought this evening, and if we do not, every one of us, do our duty, the victory may be won by that la Peyrade."

"My son is not at home, madame," answered Phellion, "and I am very sorry, for your eager interest and warm encouragement might have shaken him from his torpor. However, I will set all the gravity of the case before his eyes, and he shall most undoubtedly accompany us this evening to the Thuilliers' house."

"I need not say," added the Countess, as she rose, "that we must carefully avoid every appearance of collusion. We must not consult together, and unless the circumstances should quite naturally lead to it, we had better not even speak to each other."

"Rely on my prudence, madame," replied Phellion, "and, at the same time, permit me to offer you the expression——"

"Of your most respectful esteem!" interrupted the lady, laughing.

"No, madame, I reserve that for the close of a letter," answered Phellion solemnly. "Allow me, I beg of you, to express my most fervent and perpetual gratitude."

"We will talk about that, when we are out of the scrape,"

said Madame de Godollo, going towards the door, "and if Madame Phellion, the tenderest and most virtuous of wives and mothers, will grant me a small place in her regard, I shall be more than paid for my exertions."

Madame Phellion plunged into compliments without end. The Countess, handed to her carriage by Phellion, was already out of sight, while Phellion was still sending after her a volley of respectful thanks.

By degrees, as the company from the Quartier Latin dwindled away from Brigitte's drawing-room, and showed diminished assiduity, a more living stratum of Parisian vitality filtered in. The town councillor had drawn some important recruits from among his colleagues on the Municipal Board and the upper employés in the préfecture; the Mayor of the arrondissement and his deputies, on whom Thuillier had called on settling in his new house, had hastened to return the civility, and a few of the officers of the First Legion had also called.

The house itself had contributed a contingent; several newly established tenants lent a fresh aspect to the Sunday evening parties. Among these must be mentioned Rabourdin, formerly the head of the room in which Thuillier had had a place in the Exchequer. Having been so unhappy as to lose his wife, whose "salon" had once held its own in rivalry with Madame Colleville's, Rabourdin now lived in bachelor quarters on the third floor, over the rooms let to Cardot, the honorary notary. In consequence of an odious case of favoritism, by which he was passed over, he sent in his resignation of the public service, and at the time when Thuillier again came across him he was a director of one of the myriad projected railways, which was constantly postponed by parliamentary rivalry and delays.

It may here be incidentally mentioned that Phellion's meeting again with this really clever man of business, now a man of consequence in the financial world, afforded this worthy and honest citizen an opportunity of once more showing his native magnanimity. At the time when Rabourdin

had found himself compelled to retire, Phellion alone, of all the clerks in his department, had been faithful to him in his reverses. Rabourdin, now in a position to dispense places, as soon as chance threw his staunch supporter in his way, was prompt to offer him an easy and lucrative position.

"Môsieur," said Phellion, "your kindness touches me, and does me honor, but in honesty I must make a confession, which I can but beg you not to take amiss: I have no belief in these iron roads or railways."

"You have every right to your own opinion," said Rabourdin, with a smile. "But meanwhile we are remunerating our servants on a very satisfactory scale, and I should be happy to have you on my staff. I know by experience that you are a man to be relied on."

"Môsieur," said the Great Citizen, "I did my duty and nothing more. As to the offer you are good enough to make me, I cannot accept it. I am content with my modest position; I do not need or wish to embark on a more responsible career; I may say, with the Latin poet:

"'*Claudite jam vivos, pueri, sat prata biberunt.*'"

Thus raised in the social scale, the Thuilliers' evenings now needed another element of vitality, and to speak like Madelon in *Les Précieuses ridicules*, this "frightful dearth of amusement," of which Madame Phellion had spoken to Minard, needed a remedy. Thanks to Madame de Godollo, the general in command, who took advantage of Colleville's connection with the musical world, some performers introduced a variety into the perpetual boston and *bouillotte*. Then these old-fashioned games soon made way for whist, the only amusement, said the Hungarian, by which decent people could kill time.

Just as Louis XVI. began by setting the example of the reforms under which his throne was ultimately crushed, Brigitte at first encouraged this domestic revolution, and her wish to maintain her position becomingly in the neighborhood to which she had made up her mind to move, made her docile to every suggestion for comfort and elegance. But on

the day when the scene occurred which we are about to relate, a detail, apparently trivial, had suddenly revealed to her the danger of the slope on which she was standing.

Most of the new guests invited by Thuillier were ignorant of his sister's supremacy in the house; on arriving, they begged their host to introduce them to Madame Thuillier, and he, of course, could not tell them that his wife was but a dummy queen trembling under the iron hand of a Richelieu in petticoats, who was the sole responsible authority. So it was only after their first homage had been paid to the titular sovereign that these newcomers were presented to Brigitte, and the sternness of her demeanor, resulting from her vexation at this transfer of dignity, hardly encouraged them to take any further trouble to please her.

Alive to this loss of importance—"If I do not take care," thought this Queen Elizabeth, with the keen instinct for preëminence which was her consuming passion, "I shall become a mere nobody."

And pondering this idea, she began to think that under the conditions of a common household shared with la Peyrade as Céleste's husband, the decline she was beginning to fear might be further complicated. At once, by some sudden intuition, Félix Phellion—a good young man, too much absorbed in mathematics ever to become a formidable rival to her rule—struck her as a far more suitable match than the audacious lawyer; so, when she saw the Phellions arrive without their son, she was the first to be uneasy at his absence. In spite of Madame de Godollo's advances, this shocking lover had acted on the last line of Millevoye's famous lament:

"Et son amante ne vint pas."

(The beloved came not.)

As may easily be supposed, Brigitte was not the only person to remark the luckless youth's rigid absenteeism; Madame Thuillier very guilelessly, and Céleste with assumed indifference, also expressed their surprise. As to Madame de Godollo, who, though she had a remarkably fine voice, had

hitherto needed much entreating to sing, when she perceived how little heed Félix had paid to her counsels, she went to beg Madame Phellion to be good enough to accompany her, and between the two verses of a fashionable ballad:

"Where is your son?" she asked.

"He is coming presently," answered Madame Phellion. "His father rated him soundly; but there is a conjunction of some planets to-night, a great occasion at the observatory, and he was obliged to go——"

"How can a man be so inconceivably clumsy?" said the Countess. "Theology was not bad enough, but astronomy must be lugged in!"

Irritation gave her voice increased brilliancy, and she ended her song amid what the English call a thunder of applause.

Théodose, who was in mortal dread of her, was not backward in paying her his tribute of admiration as she resumed her seat; but she accepted his compliments with coldness amounting to incivility, and their hostility was but fomented.

He went off to console himself with Flavie. She still had too much pretension to beauty not to hate a woman who intercepted so much admiration.

"And do you mean to say that you really think that woman sings well?" Madame Colleville scornfully asked the advocate.

"At least I had to tell her so," replied la Peyrade, "since she alone can save our souls with Brigitte. But look at your Céleste. She never takes her eyes off the door, and every time a tray is brought in, though it is too late for any more arrivals, her face falls with disappointment."

It must be mentioned, by the way, that since Madame de Godollo had risen to power, trays of refreshments were freely handed on reception days and on no mean scale, loaded with ices, cakes, and fruit syrups from Tanrade, the best provider.

"Leave me in peace!" said Flavie, "I know what the little goose is thinking about. You are only too certain to marry her."

"But am I doing it for my own sake?" asked la Peyrade. "Is it not my inevitable fate, in view of insuring future prosperity for all of us? Come, come, now, there are tears in your eyes; I must leave you, you are too unreasonable. The deuce! If you want the end, you want the means, as that prig, old Phellion, says."

He went to join a group consisting of Céleste, Madame Thuillier, Madame de Godollo, Colleville, and Phellion.

Madame Colleville followed him, and, stung by the fit of jealousy she had hinted at to unmotherly ferocity,—

"Céleste," said she, "why do not you sing? Several of these gentlemen have wished to hear you."

"Oh! mamma," said Céleste, "with my poor little voice after Madame de Godollo. Besides, as you know, I have a little cold."

"That is to say that as usual you are airified and disobliging. You sing as you can, and every voice has its own merits."

"My dear," said Colleville, who, having just lost twenty francs at cards, in the courage of his vexation found spirit enough to contradict his wife, "you sing as you can is a mere vulgar axiom. You sing with your voice if you have one, and above all not after hearing an operatic voice like the Countess'. For my part I am ready to let Céleste off the performance of one of her little cooing love-songs."

"Much good is there in paying masters so dear and getting nothing in return!" And she walked away.

"So Félix has ceased to inhabit the earth," said Colleville, carrying on the conversation which Flavie had interrupted. "He dwells among the stars?"

"My dear old friend," said Phellion, "I am as much annoyed as you can be, to find my son neglecting the oldest friends of the family. And although the contemplation of the vast luminous bodies suspended in space by the Creator's hand is of greater interest in my opinion than your overwrought brain seems to think, I consider that if Félix fails to come this evening, as he promised me he would, he will

fail in the barest good manners. And I will let him know it too, you may rely on that."

"Science is a fine thing," said Théodose. "But it is a drawback that it makes men bears and maniacs."

"To say nothing," added Céleste, "of its undermining all ideas of religion."

"In that you are mistaken, my dear child!" said the Countess. "Pascal, himself a splendid instance of the falsity of your view, said, if I am not mistaken, that a little science leads us away from religion, but a great deal brings us back to it."

"Nevertheless, madame, everybody agrees that Monsieur Félix is very learned. When he was giving my brother lessons, nothing could be clearer or more intelligible, François said, than his explanations. And you see he is none the more religious."

"And I tell you, my good child, that Monsieur Félix is not irreligious, but that with a little sweetness and patience nothing will be easier than to bring him back to the fold."

"Bring a philosopher back to the practice of religion! That, madame," said la Peyrade, "seems to me a difficult matter. These gentlemen place the aim and end of their studies above all else. For instance, tell a mathematician or a geologist that the Church imperatively insists that Sunday shall be kept holy by the postponement of every kind of work —he will but shrug his shoulders, though God himself did not disdain to rest on the seventh day."

"At the same time it is quite true," said Céleste innocently, "that by not coming here this evening Monsieur Félix is guilty not merely of bad manners, but of actual sin."

"But tell me, my pretty child," answered Madame de Godollo, "do you really think that God is better pleased at seeing us meet here this evening to sing songs, eat ices, and malign our neighbors as is so often done in drawing-rooms, than at seeing a man of learning in an observatory studying the glorious secrets of creation?"

"There is a time for all things," retorted Céleste, "and as

Monsieur de la Peyrade says, God himself did not disdain to rest."

"But, my dear girl, God had time to rest," said Madame de Godollo. "He is eternal."

"That," said la Peyrade, "is one of the smartest and wittiest of impious speeches. These are the arguments that serve the turn of worldly people. The commandments of God are 'interpreted,' however explicit and positive they may be. One is taken and another left; distinctions are drawn; the free-thinker submits them to his sovereign revision, and from free-thinking it is but a step to free conduct."

During the lawyer's harangue Madame de Godollo had an eye on the clock; it was half-past eleven. The room was gradually getting empty. Only one card-table still stood open, occupied by Thuillier, the elder Minard, and two new acquaintances. Phellion had left the little group with whom he had been talking, and had joined his wife and Brigitte in a corner; and from his eager gesticulations he was evidently moved by feelings of the deepest indignation. All hope of seeing the truant now was evidently lost.

"Monsieur," said the Countess to la Peyrade, "do you do the gentlemen of the Rue des Postes the honor of believing them to be good Catholics?"

"Beyond a doubt," said the lawyer, "religion has no more staunch supporters."

"Well, this morning," said the lady, "I had the honor of being received by Father Anselme. Though he is a pattern of every Christian virtue, the reverend Father is recognized as a very able mathematician."

"I never said, madame, that the two qualities were irreconcilable."

"But you did say that a good Christian ought to do no work of any kind on a Sunday; Father Anselme must, therefore, be a terrible miscreant, for when I was admitted to his room I found him in front of a blackboard, a bit of chalk in his hand, engaged on a problem that was, no doubt, somewhat difficult, for the board was almost covered with alge-

braic formulas; and I may add that he did not seem alarmed at the idea of any scandal, since a person whose name I am not at liberty to mention—a young savant of great promise —was engaged with him in this profane occupation."

Céleste and Madame Thuillier looked at each other, and each saw a gleam of hope in the other's eyes.

"Why cannot you give the name of the younger man?" said Madame Thuillier, who always spoke out without any tact.

"Because he has not, as Father Anselme has, the shelter of his holiness to absolve him for such a flagrant desecration of Sunday; also," said Madame de Godollo with evident meaning, "because he entreated me not to say that I had met him in that place."

"Then you know a good many young and learned men?" said Céleste. "For this one and Monsieur Phellion make two already."

"My dear child," said the Countess, "you are an inquisitive little puss. But you cannot make me say what I do not intend to say—especially after what Father Anselme told me in confidence, for your brain would be off at a gallop."

This it was already; and every word the Countess spoke seemed to add to the girl's uneasiness.

"For my part," said la Peyrade ironically, "I should not be in the least surprised if Father Anselme's colleague were Monsieur Félix Phellion himself. Voltaire was always on excellent terms with the Jesuits who had brought him up; only he did not discuss religion with them."

"Ah! well, my young philosopher does discuss it with his reverend and scientific colleague. He has explained his doubts, and in fact, that was the starting-point of their friendship as scientific men."

"And does Father Anselme hope to convert his young friend?" asked Céleste.

"He is sure of it," replied the Countess. "The young mathematician, with the exception only of religious training, has been brought up in admirable principles. He also knows

that his return to the Church would make the happiness of a charming girl whom he loves and who loves him. Now, my dear child, you will not get another word from me and must fancy what you please."

"Oh, dear godmother!" cried Céleste, speaking in all the guilelessness of her heart, "if it should be he!"

And she threw herself into Madame Thuillier's arms with a burst of tears.

At this instant by a singlar coincidence a servant threw open the door and announced Monsieur Félix Phellion.

The young professor came in perspiring profusely, his tie askew, and quite out of breath.

"A pretty hour this!" said Phellion severely.

"I could not help it, father," said Félix, as he made his way across the room to Madame Thuillier and Céleste. "I could not leave till the phenomenon was over, and I found no cab. I have run all the way."

"Your ears must have been burning," said la Peyrade, in a sneering tone, "for you were foremost in the thoughts of these ladies but a moment ago; they were trying to solve a serious problem concerning you."

Félix made no reply; he saw Brigitte come into the room, returning from the dining-room whither she had been to tell the servant to bring in no more refreshments; he hastened to greet her.

After hearing some mild reproofs as to the rarity of his visits, and being dismissed forgiven by a gracious "Better late than never," he turned again to his pole-star and was a good deal surprised to hear Madame de Godollo say to him:

"I hope, monsieur, to be forgiven for an indiscretion I was betrayed into in the heat of conversation; I told these ladies, in spite of your express prohibition, where I last saw you, only this morning."

"Where I had the honor of meeting you?" said Félix. "But, madame, I did not see you."

A faint smile lighted up la Peyrade's face.

"You so certainly saw me that you spoke to me and pledged

me to secrecy. However, I have not compromised you beyond the exact truth; I only said that you sometimes call on Father Anselme, and that hitherto you had met on scientific grounds, but that you defend your doubts against him quite as stoutly as against Céleste."

"Father Anselme!" said Félix, stupidly puzzled.

"Why, of course!" said la Peyrade, "a great mathematician, who does not despair of converting you. Mademoiselle Céleste wept for joy."

Félix looked about him in utter bewilderment. Madame de Godollo looked at him with an expression that a dog would have understood.

"I only wish I could have done anything half so satisfactory to Mademoiselle Céleste," he said at length, "but I am afraid, madame, that you are mistaken."

"Listen to me, monsieur. I will dot my *i*'s, and if your bashfulness prompts you to hide to the last a proceeding of which you have no reason to be ashamed, contradict me. I will submit to it as a punishment for having divulged a secret which, as I frankly confess, you commended to my discretion."

Madame Thuillier and Céleste were a perfect spectacle in themselves; never were doubt and expectation more strongly painted on human features.

Measuring each word, Madame de Godollo went on:

"I told these ladies, because I know how deeply they are interested in your salvation, and because you were accused of shamelessly defying God's commandments by working on Sunday—I told them, I say, that I had met you this morning in Father Anselme's room in the Rue des Postes—that he, as learned as yourself, was engaged with your help in working out a problem; I said that your interviews with that holy and enlightened man had led to other discussions; that you had laid your religious doubts before him, and that he did not despair of refuting them. There is nothing to humiliate your self-respect in confirming my statements. It is merely that you had prepared a surprise for Céleste, and

I unluckily let it out. But when she hears you say that I have spoken the truth, you will still give her such happiness that you cannot refuse to speak the words she hopes for."

"Why, surely, monsieur, there can be no disgrace in seeking for the light; you, who are so honest, so averse to an untruth, can hardly deny a fact that the Countess so steadily affirms!" said la Peyrade.

Félix hesitated a moment; then he said to Céleste: "Will you, Mademoiselle Céleste, let me speak two words to you alone?"

Céleste rose, and at an approving nod from Madame Thuillier Félix took her hand and led her into a window recess two yards from where they were all standing.

"Céleste," he said, in a low tone, "I entreat you to wait a little longer. Why, look," and he pointed to Charles' Wain in the sky, "up and away beyond the visible stars there lies a future for us all. As to Father Anselme, I cannot confirm anything, for it is not true. It is a kindly meant fiction. But have patience, you shall hear things——"

Céleste turned away, leaving him to gaze at the stars.

"He is gone mad!" said she, in despairing accents, as she took her place by Madame Thuillier.

And Félix confirmed the diagnosis by rushing out of the room without observing how anxiously Phellion and his mother followed close on his heels.

While all the bystanders gazed in dismay at this sudden exit, la Peyrade went up to Madame de Godollo.

"You must admit," he said very politely, "that it is very difficult to pull a man out of the water when he is bent on drowning——"

"I had not, I confess, conceived of such imbecility," answered the Countess. "It is too idiotic. I go over to the enemy; and with that enemy, whenever he pleases, I will go into a full and frank explanation, in my own rooms."

Théodose, next morning, was devoured by curiosity on two points: How would Céleste decide in the choice she was to

make? What could this Countess Torna de Godollo have to say to him, and what did she want of him?

The first of these questions certainly seemed first to claim an answer; and yet, a secret instinct drew la Peyrade toward a more immediate solution of the second. Still, as he made up his mind to go first to the Countess, he quite understood that, in the meeting to which he had been invited, he could not be too carefully prepared and equipped.

It had rained in the morning, and this foreseeing mind did not need telling that a splash staining the polish of a boot may bring a man to discomfiture. So he sent the porter to fetch him a cab, and at about three o'clock drove off from the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer towards the more fashionable district of the Madeleine.

That he had devoted much thought to his toilet may be easily supposed; it must hit the happy medium between the free and easy style of morning wear and the full dress of an after-dinner call. Required by his profession to wear a white neckcloth, which he very rarely failed to display, and yet not daring to appear in a frock coat, he felt the risk of falling into one of the two extremes which he thought it desirable to avoid. But in a tail-coat closely buttoned across, and gloves of a neutral tint, instead of straw-color, he escaped too great solemnity, and, at the same time, had not the very provincial and poor-relation appearance that comes of evening dress out walking at an hour when the sun is still above the horizon.

Our crafty diplomatist took care not to be driven to the door of the house. He would not have liked the occupant of the entresol to see him getting out of a hackney-cab, and he would have feared the eyes of the first-floor residents, detecting him in a visit to the rooms beneath them; it would have given rise to endless comments. So he was set down at the corner of the Rue Royale; thence, by walking on the fairly dry footway, and carefully picking his steps, he reached the house immaculate.

He was there so lucky as not to be seen from the porter's

lodge. The husband, a beadle at the church of the Madeleine, was on duty, and his wife was showing some still vacant rooms to an intending tenant. So Théodose, escaping inspection, stole up to the door of the sanctuary to which he was to be admitted.

A gentle pull at a rope trimmed with gimp rang a bell within. A few seconds later another and a more emphatic peal, of shriller tone, seemed intended to warn the maid-servant that she was too slow in answering the door; and, in point of fact, immediately after, a woman of mature age, too respectable to wear the costume of a chambermaid in a comedy, had admitted him.

The lawyer gave her his name, and was desired to wait in a dining-room of severely luxurious taste. The maid returned at once, and ushered him into the most fascinating and splendid drawing-room that is conceivable under the low ceiling of an entresol.

The divinity of the place sat by a table covered with a cloth of Italian design, in which gold thread sparkled among the rich colors of fine embroidery. As la Peyrade went in, she bowed without rising. The maid placed a chair, the Countess, meanwhile, saying, "You will excuse me, monsieur, if I seal a note to be sent in a hurry?"

The lawyer bowed assent. The foreign lady took from a desk inlaid with tortoise-shell, in the style of Boule, a sheet of blue-tinted English note-paper, which she enclosed in an envelope, and, after writing the address, she rose and rang the bell.

The maid at once came in, lighted a spirit-lamp set in a little stand ornamented with pretty sculptured figures; over the flame hung a little silver-gilt pannikin, containing a scrap of scented sealing-wax. As soon as the heat had melted the wax, the maid dropped it on to the note, and handed her mistress an engraved seal. The lady stamped it with her own fair hands, and said, "Send this at once."

The woman stepped forward to take the letter, but from inadvertence or over-haste, the document fell at la Peyrade's

feet, and as he quickly stooped to pick it up, he involuntarily read the address. It was to *Monsieur le Ministre des Affaires étrangères.* And above, in one corner, the significant word *private,* gave the missive a character of intimacy.

"I beg your pardon," said the lady, taking the note from la Peyrade's hand, for he had the good taste to restore it to her, so as to render the little service to the mistress. "And have the goodness not to lose it," she added severely, to the luckless waiting-woman.

Having thus dismissed her, the Hungarian Countess moved from the chair in front of the writing-table, and seated herself on a sofa upholstered in pale gray satin.

During all this little flutter of business, la Peyrade had had the pleasure of taking stock of the splendor about him. Pictures by recognized masters showed up against a sober background, enlivened by silk cord and gimp; on a stand of gilt wood was an enormous Chinese jar; in front of the windows were flower-stands, in which a *lilum rubrum,* with its twisted petals, hung over dwarf camellias white and red, and little Chinese magnolia shrubs, with their creamy white flowers tipped with rose; then, in one corner, hung a trophy of weapons, strange and very gorgeous, accounted for by the semi-barbarous nationality of the owner. Finally, some bronzes and statuettes of exquisite workmanship, and on the seats, which rolled smoothly over a carpet of Turkish design, a medley anarchy of pillows and stuffs, completed the furniture of the room, which the lawyer had last seen with Thuillier and Brigitte, before it was inhabited. It was transfigured beyond recognition.

With a little more knowledge of the world the lawyer would have been less surprised at the infinite pains the Countess had devoted to the arrangement of this little place. A woman's drawing-room is her kingdom, where she is absolute sovereign; there she reigns and rules in the fullest sense of the words. There she has to fight more than one battle, and almost always comes off victorious. In fact, has she not chosen every ornament, and harmonized all the colors,

and does she not light or shade it to her taste? If she has any intelligent sense of stage-arrangement, it is impossible but that everything about her should be placed by her hand where it tells with the best effect; impossible but that all her personal advantages should be thrown into rare relief. You may say that you do not know all a woman's perfections till you have seen her in the prismatic light of her own drawing-room; but, on the other hand, beware of attempting to gauge and appraise her if you have never seen her anywhere else.

Coquettishly sunk in a corner of the sofa, her head carelessly resting on one arm of which the rounded whiteness could be seen to the elbow in the loose open sleeve of a black velvet wrapper, a foot for Cinderella, in an easy but tiny Russia-leather slipper, resting on an orange plush cushion stamped with flowers in relief, the fair Hungarian looked like a portrait by Lawrence or Winterhalter, but her attitude was more artless.

"Monsieur," said she, with a smile, and the slight foreign accent which gave added witchery to her speech, "I cannot help regarding it as a very droll thing that a man of your talent and keen penetration should have thought of me as an enemy."

"Indeed, Madame la Comtesse," replied Théodose, showing in his eyes some astonishment, not unmixed with distrust, "appearances, as you must allow, justified my simplicity. A rival crossed my path when I was going on towards a marriage which offered itself to me as in every way suitable. By a happy miracle this rival was clumsy to a degree, and not difficult to set aside, when, suddenly, the most charming and unlooked-for auxiliary rushed in to aid him on precisely the most vulnerable side . . ."

"And you must confess," said the Countess, laughing, "that my protégé was brilliant and seconded my efforts nobly!"

"His blundering, I fancy," said la Peyrade, "was not altogether unexpected by you; the encouragement with which you honored him, madame, was all the more cruelly tantalizing to me."

"And what great misfortune would it be," the lady went on with fascinating insidiousness, "if you were exempt from marrying Mademoiselle Céleste? Are you really so devoted, monsieur, to that little schoolgirl?"

In the word, but yet more in the tone given to it, there was something more than scorn, there was hatred. The accent was sure not to escape so keen an observer as la Peyrade. Still, as he was not the man to venture very far on the strength of this simple remark, he went on:

"Madame, the vulgar phrase 'to get settled' sums up the situation when a man, after a long struggle, is at an end of his efforts and his illusions, and ready to come to terms with the future for better or worse. Well, when *settling* appears under the form of a girl—with more virtue than beauty, I do not deny, but who can bring her husband the money that is indispensable for conjugal happiness,—is it surprising that gratitude should fill his heart, and that he should jump at the peaceful joys which seem to smile on him?"

"I had always thought," replied the lady, "that a man's intelligence and purview ought to be the measure of his ambition; and I supposed that one so profoundly clever as to proclaim himself the advocate of the poor would have less modest, less rustic aspirations."

"Ah! madame, the iron hand of necessity forces stranger forms of resignation on us than that. The question of daily bread is one before which every other pales, and to which everything yields. Was not Apollo compelled for his living to keep the sheep of Admetus?"

"But the folds of Admetus were at any rate those of a king," replied Madame de Godollo. "Apollo would certainly never have submitted to be shepherd to a—middle-class citizen."

The pause made in the conclusion by the handsome Hungarian seemed to be leading up to a name, and la Peyrade felt that out of mere mercy the words "a Thuillier" had been left out of the argument, which had been clinched by the mention of the species instead of going so far as the individual.

"I feel, madame," said the lawyer, "that the distinction is no less true than subtle. But Apollo has no choice."

"I do not like men who value themselves too highly," said the Countess stiffly, "but even less I like those who undersell their merchandise. I am always afraid lest they should be making me the dupe of some clever and elaborate trick. You, monsieur, are fully aware of your own value, and your hypocritical humility annoys me greatly. It proves that my overtures of good-will have not given rise to even a beginning of confidence between us."

"I assure you, on my honor, that up to this time life has given me no reason to believe myself possessed of any flagrant superiority."

"Well," said the lady, "I ought, perhaps, to believe in the modesty of a man who was prepared to accept the humiliating issue which I endeavored to hinder."

"As I, perhaps, ought to believe in the reality of the benevolence, which, in order to rescue me, had previously chastened me so severely," said la Peyrade, with meaning.

The Hungarian glanced at him reproachfully; she played with one of the ends of her sash, and, casting down her eyes, gave vent to a sigh, so faintly perceptible that it might almost have passed as part of her regular breathing.

"You are rancorous," said she, "and judge people from general impressions. After all," she added, "you are possibly justified in reminding me that I took a roundabout way of interfering—absurdly enough—in concerns which are no business of mine. Go on, my dear sir, and prosper in this brilliant marriage where you find so many advantages combined; only allow me to wish that you may never repent of a success which I will no longer strive to postpone."

The Provençal had not been spoiled by women. Poverty, against which he had so long been struggling, does not throw gallant adventures in a man's way; and even since he had freed himself from its worst clutches, devoting all his thoughts to his future prospects, with the exception of the farce played with Madame Colleville, "affairs of the heart"

had filled a very small part of his life. Like all the men who are overwhelmingly busy and yet goaded by the demon of the flesh, he was content with the ignoble love-making that may be bought any night at a street corner, and that is easily reconciled with the externals of devotion.

Thus the perplexity of a novice in such adventures may be imagined, as he found himself balancing between the fear of losing a delightful opportunity, and that of finding a serpent under the flowers that seemed within his reach. Too much reserve, too lukewarm an eagerness, might offend the fair foreigner's self-esteem, and suddenly dry up the fount at which she seemed to invite him to drink; but if, on the other hand, this apparent forwardness on her part were but a snare; if the kindness—to him quite inexplicable—of which he had so suddenly become the object, aimed solely at betraying him into some false step, to be used subsequently as a weapon against himself to embroil him with the Thuilliers, what a blow that would be to his reputation for cleverness, what a poor figure he would cut as the dog dropping the substance for the shadow.

As we have seen, la Peyrade was of the school of Tartuffe; and the candor with which that master explains to Elmire that without some earnest of the favors to which he aspires he cannot believe in her affectionate advances, seemed to the lawyer not inapplicable to the present occasion—a little softened in the expression.

"Madame la Comtesse," said he, "you place me in a position in which I am much to be pitied. I was proceeding cheerfully to this union—you destroy my faith in it; and yet, if I should break it off, what use am I, with these brilliant gifts, to make of my recovered liberty?"

"La Bruyère, I think, remarks that nothing so cools the blood as having escaped committing a folly."

"No doubt. Still, that is but a negative blessing. I am of an age and in such circumstances as require me to look for some more definite results. The interest you vouchsafe to feel in me surely does not end at leaving me a blank page

I love Mademoiselle Colleville, not indeed with imperious and overwhelming passion, but I do love her; her hand has been promised me, and before giving it up——"

"So, under special circumstances," said the Countess quickly, "you might be prepared to break it off; and," she added, in a calmer tone, "there might be some chance of convincing you that by thus seizing the first offer you are compromising your future career—that other opportunities might present themselves?"

"But, then, madame, it would be wise to foresee some glimpse of them."

This determination to be on the safe side seemed to irritate the Countess.

"Faith is a virtue only because it trusts in the unseen," said she. "You distrust yourself, another form of awkwardness! I am not happy in those I select as my protégés."

"But, at any rate, madame, am I very indiscreet in wishing to have some remote notion of the prospect your kindness may have imagined for me?"

"Highly indiscreet," said the lady coldly, "for it is evident that you only pledge yourself to conditional obedience. Say no more about it. You have gone far with Mademoiselle Colleville; she suits you in many ways: marry her. One struggle more—you will not again find me in your way."

"But does Mademoiselle Colleville suit me so well?" said la Peyrade. "That is precisely the point on which you have raised a doubt in my mind. And do you not think it really cruel to fling at me two such contradictory statements without any proof to support either?"

"Ah!" said the Countess, out of patience, "I must bring documentary evidence for my opinions? Well, monsieur, there is only one very conclusive fact that I can swear to: Céleste does not love you."

"I confess," said la Peyrade, "that I am certainly pledged to a marriage of convenience."

"And she never can love you," Madame de Godollo went on, with warmth, "because she can never understand you.

Her true match is that fair little man, as shy and pasty-faced as herself. The contact of those two placid and lifeless natures will result in the lukewarm duet which constitutes the *ne plus ultra* of happiness in the opinion of the world in which she was born and has lived. Just try to make the little simpleton understand that when money is so lucky as to meet talent, it may think itself honored in the conjunction! Try to get that into the brains of the odious wretches about her! The enriched middle class! and among them you propose to find rest after your hard work and your long trials! But do you not see that twenty times a day your contribution as compared with theirs—all in money—will be weighed and found outrageously wanting? On one side the *Iliad,* the *Cid,* the *Freyschütz* and the frescoes of the Vatican; on the other hand, a hundred thousand crowns in hard cash—and say which will command their admiration? Do you know to what I should compare a man of imagination thrown into the middle-class atmosphere? To Daniel cast into the lions' den—minus the miracle."

This invective against the citizen class had been poured out with such vehement conviction that it could hardly fail to be contagious.

"Ah! madame," exclaimed Théodose, "how eloquently you express the ideas which have haunted my dull and anxious mind! But I have always felt myself pressed by the cruel compulsion, the necessity of making a position——"

"Necessity, position!" interrupted the Countess with even greater warmth of tone, "mere empty words which have no ring to a superior man, but which scare fools as if they were formidable impediments. Necessity! Does it exist for the choicer spirits, for those who know what Will means? A minister—a Gascon—uttered a motto which ought to be graven over the entrance to every career: 'Everything comes to him who knows how to wait.'

"And do you not know that to men of the highest stamp marriage is either a chain that fetters them to the vulgarest

and meanest facts of existence, or else wings to bear them to the loftiest summits of the social world? The wife you need, monsieur, and whom you may not have to long wait for in the future, unless you are in frantic haste to sell yourself for the first fortune that comes to hand, is the woman who will understand you because she is able to read you; who will be your coadjutor, your intellectual helpmate, and not a cooking-pot on two legs; who, your secretary to-day, might to-morrow hold her own as the wife of a deputy, or of an ambassador; who is capable, in short, of giving you her heart for a fulcrum, her drawing-room for a stage, her friends for a ladder; and who, as the reward of all the spring and power she could give you, would ask no more than to shine near your throne, in the glory and splendor she had foreseen would be your lot."

Intoxicated by her own words, the Hungarian Countess was grand; her eyes flashed, her nostrils dilated; she seemed to see the visions called up by her vivid eloquence, to touch them with her quivering hands. For a moment Théodose was dazzled by this sort of sunrise suddenly blazing on his life.

At the same time, as he was a monstrous prudent man, who had made it a rule to himself never to advance anything but on sound available security, he was tempted to reconsider the situation.

"Madame la Comtesse," said he, "you blamed me just now for talking like a bourgeois, and all I have to fear is that you talk like a goddess. I admire you, I listen to you, but I am not convinced. Such sublime devotion and self-sacrifice may be found perhaps in heaven, but, on earth, who dares boast that he has met with it?"

"You are mistaken, monsieur," said the lady solemnly. "Such devotion is rare, but it is neither incredible nor impossible. You only need the skill to find them, and yet more the hand to hold them when they are offered you."

With these words she rose majestically.

La Peyrade understood that he had really displeased her

and was dismissed; he rose and bowed respectfully, asking permission to call now and again.

"Monsieur," said Madame de Godollo, "among Hungarians, a primitive and almost barbarous race, when a door is open, it is wide open; when it is shut, it is double-locked."

This dignified but ambiguous reply was emphasized by a slight bow. La Peyrade went away, bewildered by manners so new to him, so unlike those of Flavie, of Brigitte, or Madame Minard, and wondering, as he went, whether he had played the game well.

On leaving Madame de Godollo, la Peyrade felt that he must have time to think. Beneath the surface of his conversation with this strange woman, what was it that he could discern—a trap, or the offer of a rich wife? In this dilemma it would be neither intelligent nor prudent to press Céleste for her decision, since asking for her ultimatum would force an engagement on himself, and close the door to the chances, vague indeed, which had been hinted to him.

The upshot of his consultation with himself, as he walked along the boulevard, was that for the moment he must think only of gaining time. So, instead of calling at the Thuilliers', he went to his own rooms, and there wrote the following note:

"My dear Thuillier:—

"You will not, I dare say, have thought it strange that I should not have gone to your house to-day. Apart from my dread of what my sentence may be, I did not care to appear like an impatient and ill-bred dun. A day or two more or less count for little in such a case, but Mademoiselle Céleste may find them advantageous for her perfect freedom of decision. You will see me no more till you write to me. I have recovered some degree of composure, and added a few pages to our manuscript, and we can now

be ready to hand it over complete to the printers in a very short time.

"Ever yours,
"THÉODOSE DE LA PEYRADE."

Two hours later the "male servant" spoken of by Minard, in a dress which was an evident transition towards a livery which as yet they did not risk, brought la Peyrade this answer:

"Come this evening without fail; we will talk matters over with Brigitte.

"Yours most sincerely,
"JÉRÔME THUILLIER."

"Good!" said la Peyrade to himself. "There is a hitch somewhere, and I shall have time to turn round."

In the evening, when he called at the Thuilliers', Madame de Godollo, who was with Brigitte at the moment, hastily rose and took leave. As she met the lawyer, she bowed to him with distant formality. Nothing could be inferred from this abrupt departure which might mean anything.

After the usual remarks on the weather, such as always pass between people who have met to discuss a delicate matter on which they are not certain to agree, Brigitte—who had sent her brother out for an airing, telling him to leave the business to her—began:

"My dear boy, it was very thoughtful of you not to come like a highwayman and hold your pistol to our throats, for we really were not fully prepared with an answer. I rather think that Céleste will ask for a little renewal," she added, borrowing her metaphor from her old business of a bill-discounter.

"Then, at any rate," said la Peyrade eagerly, "she has not decided in favor of Monsieur Félix Phellion?"

"You rogue!" said the old maid. "You settled that last

evening. Still, there is no need to tell you that she leans a little to that side."

"Short of being blind, who can help seeing it?" said Théodose.

"Not that that would stand in the way of my plans," Mademoiselle Thuillier went on, "but it accounts for my asking for a little time for Céleste. I had another reason, too, for postponing the marriage; I wanted to give you time to make your way a little in the child's liking; but you two—you and Thuillier, between you, have upset all my plans."

"Nothing that I know of has been done without your consent," said the lawyer, "and though I said nothing to you about it for a fortnight, it was out of sheer good feeling; Thuillier told me that you and he had settled everything."

"Thuillier knows perfectly well, on the contrary, that I would have nothing to do with all your schemes, and perhaps if you had not made yourself so scarce lately, I should have been the first to say that I did not approve of them. However, I may add that I too have done nothing to interfere with their success."

"That was not enough," said la Peyrade; "your concurrence was necessary."

"Possibly; but I, knowing women better than you do, being one of the sort myself, strongly suspected that, having two lovers to choose from, Céleste might think she was left free to think as much as she pleased of the one she liked best, and I had always left her in uncertainty about Félix, foreseeing the moment when she would have to be brought to her senses."

"In short," said Théodose, "she refuses me."

"Far worse, she accepts you, saying that she had given her word. But it is so easy to see that she regards herself as your victim, that in your place I should not think such success very flattering or very promising."

At any other time la Peyrade would have answered that he accepted the sacrifice, and that it would be his business

to win the heart which at present yielded so reluctantly; but a little delay suited his ends.

"What, then, is your advice?" he asked Brigitte. "What steps should I take?"

"The first step," said Brigitte, "will be to finish the pamphlet for Thuillier, for he is going crazy over it, and then leave me to manœuvre in your interest."

"But are my interests in friendly hands? For, to tell the truth, little aunt, I cannot be blind to the fact that for some little time past I have found you changed toward me."

"I—changed toward you? Where do you see that, you fanciful mortal?"

"Oh, in mere shades of manner," said la Peyrade; "but it is perfectly evident that since the advent here of your Countess Torna——"

"My dear boy, the Hungarian lady had done me good service, and I am grateful; but is that any proof that I am ungrateful to you, who have done us far greater services?"

"You must allow," said Théodose craftily, "that she has spoken ill of me to you?"

"That is but natural, whatever she may have said. Fine ladies like her must have all the world at their feet, and she knows that you are thinking only of Céleste. But whatever she may have said it has run off me like water off oilcloth."

"And so, little aunt, I may rely on you?" said la Peyrade.

"Yes, if you do not worry me, and let me go my own way to work."

"Come now, what will you do?" said la Peyrade, with blunt good-humor.

"In the first place, I shall forbid Félix from ever setting foot in the house again."

"But will that be possible?" said the lawyer, "or even decent?"

"Perfectly possible, and I will let him know it through Phellion himself. As his principles are his favorite hobby, he will be the first to admit that, as his son declines to do

what is needful to win Céleste, he ought to relieve us of his presence."

"And what next?"

"Next, I shall explain to Céleste that she was allowed to have her choice of one of two husbands; and that as she will not take Félix, she must put up with you—a pious youth, such as she fancies. Be quite easy, I will make the best of you—of your generosity in not taking advantage of the promise she gave; but all this will take time, and if we have to wait another week for that pamphlet, between this and then Thuillier will only be fit for Charenton."

"The pamphlet can be finished in two days; but honor bright, little aunt, we are playing a square game? Mountains, as the saying goes, cannot meet, but men may; and when the election comes on, I am in a position to do Thuillier a good turn or a bad one. The other day, I may tell you, I had a dreadful fright. I had a letter in my pocket in which he spoke of the pamphlet as being written by me, and for a minute I thought I lost that letter in the Luxembourg. There would have been a pretty to-do in all the neighborhood."

"Who can steal a march on an artful one like you?" said the old maid, fully understanding the covert threat of this last speech, brought in so naturally in the course of conversation. "Still, honestly," she added, "have you any fault to find with us? Is it not you, on the contrary, who have dealt short measure of what you promised? The Cross, which was to be given within a week, and the pamphlet, which ought to have been out long ago?"

"The pamphlet and the Cross will each bring the other," said la Peyrade, rising. "Tell Thuillier to come and see me to-morrow evening. I think he may finish off the last sheet. But, above all, do not believe all the mischief Madame de Godollo tries to make. I have a great idea that, to become entirely mistress of the house, she wants to alienate all your friends, and at the same time to flatter and hoodwink Thuillier."

"It is quite true," said Brigitte, whom the lawyer, as a Parthian shot, had stung in the tender spot, her love of authority; "I will bear what you say in mind. She is a bit of a flirt, is that young madame."

By his ingeniously worded phrase la Peyrade had ascertained an important point; Brigitte's reply showed him that the Countess had said nothing of the visit he had paid her that day. This reticence he thought meant a great deal.

Four days later, the printer, the stitcher, and the hot-presser having all done their work, Thuillier could give himself the indescribable pleasure of setting out for a walk in the evening, beginning at the boulevards and through various arcades, to the Palais-Royal. On every bookseller's window he paused to glance where he saw staring at him from yellow paper, the grand title:

DE L'IMPÔT ET DE L'AMORTISSEMENT

PAR J. THUILLIER

Membre du Conseil Général de la Seine

Having succeeded in persuading himself that the care he had given to the correction of the proofs gave him the credit of the work, his paternal heart, like that of the crow in the fable, was bursting with satisfaction. It may be added, that he formed a very poor opinion of the booksellers who did not announce this latest new work for sale, destined, as he believed, to be an European event. Without having any very clear idea as to how he could be revenged on them for their neglect, he made a note of the names of these refractory dealers, and owed them as bitter a grudge as if they had affronted him.

He spent the next day in the delightful occupation of writing some letters of presentation, and wrapping up fifty copies, to which the inscription within, *"from the author,"* seemed to him to give an inestimable value.

The third day, however, brought a check to his satisfaction. He had employed, as his publisher, a young man who had rushed recklessly into the business, establishing himself in the Passage des Panoramas, where he paid an enormous rent. He was the nephew of Barbet, the publisher who was Brigitte's tenant in the house in the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, with whom she did her discounting business; and this Barbet junior was a young man who knew not fear, and who, when his uncle recommended him to Thuillier, was quite sure that, if he were not restricted in the matter of advertisements, he could secure a call for a second edition by the end of a week.

Now Thuillier had spent nearly fifteen hundred francs in advertising; numberless copies had been sent to the papers; at the end of the third day, just seven copies had been sold, and three of these taken on credit.

It might be supposed that the youthful publisher would somewhat lower his assurance, when telling Thuillier of this beggarly result.

On the contrary, "I am delighted," said this *Guzman* of the book-trade. "If we had sold a hundred copies, I should be very uneasy as to the fifteen hundred we have printed. I should call that hanging fire; whereas, this very small sale proves that the whole edition will be sold off at one rush."

"But when?" asked Thuillier, to whom this seemed somewhat paradoxical.

"Why, as soon as we get notices in all the papers," said Barbet. "Advertisements only serve to catch the eye of the public, they attract notice. 'This must be an interesting work—*Taxation and its Abatement*—a good title!' But the more catching the title, the more shy are the buyers; they have often been taken in. They wait for the reviews. Instead of that, if a book is doomed not to sell well, there are always a hundred buyers to rush in, and, after them, thank you for nothing! Not a copy sold."

"So you do not think it a hopeless case?" asked Thuillier.

"On the contrary, I take a most favorable view of it. As soon as the *Débats,* the *Constitutionnel,* the *Siècle,* and the *Presse* have reviewed it, and especially if it is abused by the *Débats,* which is ministerial, it will all be cleared out in less than four days."

"You talk very big," replied Thuillier; "but how are we to get at this chorus of the press?"

"Oh, I will take care of that," said Barbet. "I am on capital terms with all the editors; they say I have so much go, that I remind them of Ladvocat at his best."

"In that case, my good fellow, you ought to have seen them by this time."

"Oh, begging your pardon, Monsieur Thuillier, there is some ceremony to be observed, in approaching your journalist; and as you complained of the fifteen hundred francs it had cost you to advertise, I did not like to ask you to allow me to open any further account."

"But what for?" said Thuillier.

"When you were elected member of the Municipal Council, where was your election managed?"

"In my house, of course," replied Thuillier.

"In your house, yes; but at a dinner, followed by a dance, and a dance ending in a supper. Well, my dear sir, there are not two ways of doing business. Boileau said:

> "At dinner, in these days, we settle each question,
> And men now are governed by help of digestion."

"Then you advise me to give a dinner to the newspapers?"

"Yes; but not at your own house, for journalists, you see, are bored by women—they have to behave. Besides, what we want here is not a dinner, but a breakfast. In the evening, these gentlemen have first performances to attend, the paper to make up, to say nothing of their little private affairs. In the morning, on the contrary, they have nothing to think of. I have always given breakfast."

"But such meals are expensive. You journalists are so very particular!"

"Pooh! Twenty francs a head, besides wine. Say you have a party of ten, with a hundred crowns you will do the thing handsomely. In fact, from the point of view of economy, a breakfast is best; you would not get off for less than five hundred francs for a dinner."

"You are going rather fast, young man," said Thuillier.

"Well, everybody knows that it costs money to get into the Chamber, and you are paving the way for your election."

"But how am I to get at these gentlemen? Must I go myself to invite them?"

"Not at all; you have sent them your pamphlet; you beg them to meet you at Véfour's, or at Philippe's; they will understand, never fear."

"Ten guests," said Thuillier, beginning to enter into the idea. "But surely there are not so many leading newspapers?"

"That is true," said the publisher, "but we must have the tag-rag as well; the curs bark loudest. The breakfast will be talked about; they will think you have tried to be select, and each one excluded will mean an enemy."

"So you think it will be enough merely to send the invitations?"

"Yes. I will make a list; you write the notes and send them to me. I will undertake to have them delivered; some I will take myself."

"Well, if I were sure that this expense would have the desired result," said Thuillier, doubtfully.

"*If I were sure* is good," said Barbet consequentially. "But, my dear sir, it is as safe as a mortgage; do this and I guarantee the sale of the fifteen hundred copies. Well, at forty sous, allowing for the discount, that comes to three thousand francs. You see all expenses will be more than covered, ordinary and extraordinary."

"Well," said Thuillier, leaving the shop, "I will talk it over with la Peyrade."

"As you please, my dear sir. But make up your mind quickly. Write it all hot; serve it all hot; swallow it all hot!

Those are the three quick moves of the author, the publisher, and the public. Short of that, the thing falls flat, and it is better to have nothing to do with it."

When la Peyrade was consulted, he did not honestly think very highly of the plan; but in his heart of hearts he was full of bitter animosity against Thuillier, and was delighted to see this fresh tax levied on the man's cocksure imbecility and confident inexperience.

As for Thuillier, his mania for appearing as a public character, and being talked about, possessed him to such a pitch that, though he groaned at seeing his purse still further bled, he had made up his mind to the loss, even before asking the lawyer's advice. La Peyrade's very reserved and doubtful approbation was more than enough to confirm him in his resolution, and that very evening he went back to Barbet junior's and asked for the list of men to be invited.

Barbet had soon made it out, but instead of ten guests, as he had suggested, he brought the number up to fifteen, without counting himself and la Peyrade, whom Thuillier felt he must have to be his second in a meeting where he was conscious that he would be a little out of his depth.

As Thuillier glanced over the list just given to him—

"Why, my dear boy," said he to the publisher, "you have put down the names of papers that no one ever heard of. What on earth are the *Moralisateur,* the *Lanterne de Diogène,* the *Pelican,* and the *Écho de la Bièvre?*"

"You have made a bad shot in falling foul of the *Écho de la Bièvre,*" answered Barbet; "a paper that is printed in the twelfth arrondissement for which you propose to stand, and which is taken by all the tanners of the Mouffetard quarter."

"Well, let that stand then," said Thuillier, "but the *Pelican*——"

"The *Pelican?* It is a paper that lies on every dentist's waiting-room table—the best agents for *puff* in the world. Now, on an average, how many teeth are drawn, do you suppose, every day in Paris?"

"Well, then, leave it," said Thuillier, who authoritatively put his pen through some names, reducing the party to fourteen.

"And then if anybody fails us, we shall be thirteen."

"As if I believed in that superstition! What next?" said Thuillier the strong-minded.

And the list being closed and restricted to fourteen, then and there, on a corner of the publisher's writing-table, he wrote the invitations for the next day but one, as the matter was pressing, and Barbet assured him that no one would take offence at the shortness of the notice.

The company was to assemble at Véfour's, the restaurant most in vogue among the middle classes and provincials.

Barbet was on the scene even before Thuillier, wearing a necktie enough of itself to be a feature and an event in the satirical set to whom he was to display it.

The publisher took it upon himself to change various items of the menu, and more especially, instead of vulgarly postponing the champagne till the last course, he ordered two bottles well iced to be placed on the table from the first, with some pounds of prawns, of which the giver of the feast had not thought.

Thuillier, who very coldly sanctioned these amendments, was followed by la Peyrade; then there was a long interval during which no guests appeared. The hour had been fixed at eleven, and at a quarter to twelve no one had come.

Barbet, whose spirits never fell, made the consolatory remark that an invitation to a restaurant was like a bidding to a funeral, where, as everybody knew, eleven o'clock means twelve. In fact, at a few minutes to twelve two gentlemen appeared, with goat-beards and smelling very strongly of the smoking divan. Thuillier thanked them effusively for the honor they were good enough to do him; then there was another long wait of which the torment need not be described.

By one o'clock five guests had dropped in, besides Barbet and la Peyrade. It need hardly be said that no creditable

representative of any respectable paper had accepted this preposterous invitation. They were obliged to sit down; a few polite speeches on the immensely interesting character of his publication could not console Thuillier, or deceive him as to the bitterness of his failure; but for the vivacity of the publisher, who seized the reins Thuillier could not hold, for he was as gloomy as Hippolytus on the road to Mycenæ, the icy coldness and depression of the meeting would have been intolerable.

Oysters were first served; and the wines of Champagne and Chablis with which they were washed down had begun to raise the thermometer, when a youth in a cap, rushing into the banqueting room, dealt Thuillier a deadly and quite unexpected blow.

"Here, sir," said the messenger to Barbet—he was one of the bookseller's clerks,—"we are done for! The police have searched your place. A sergeant and two constables have just seized this gentleman's pamphlet—here is the paper they gave me for you."

"See what that means, Mr. Lawyer," said Barbet, handing the stamped sheet to la Peyrade. His accustomed impudence for the moment failed him.

"A summons to appear within a few days in the assize court," said la Peyrade, after looking at the official scrawl.

Thuillier, as pale as death, turned to the publisher.

"Then you did not carry out all the requisite formalities?" said he, with choking utterance.

"Oh! it is not a question of formalities," said la Peyrade. "The pamphlet is seized as illegal printed matter, inciting hatred and contempt of the existing government. You, my poor Thuillier, will, no doubt, find a similar document awaiting you at home."

"But this is treachery!" cried Thuillier, losing his head.

"Bless me, my dear fellow, you, I suppose, know what you put into your pamphlet. I confess I found nothing in it to whip a cat for."

"It is some misunderstanding," said Barbet, recovering

his courage. "It will be cleared up, and it will be a splendid advertisement—won't it, gentlemen?"

"Waiter, a pen and ink!" cried one of the journalists thus appealed to.

"You will have time enough to write your article," said one of his colleagues. "'What connection is there between a bomb and this *filet sauté?*'"

A parody of a famous speech made by Charles XII. of Sweden, when a cannon-ball interrupted his dictating to one of his secretaries.

"Gentlemen," said Thuillier, rising, "you will excuse me; if, as Monsieur Barbet thinks, this is all a mistake, it must be cleared up at once, so with your permission I shall forthwith proceed to the law-courts. La Peyrade," he added with some meaning, "you will not, I think, refuse to accompany me. And you, my worthy publisher, would do well to come too."

"Not I," said Barbet junior. "Breakfast is breakfast. If the lawyers have blundered, so much the worse for them!"

"But if the action is a serious matter," cried Thuillier, in a perfect agony.

"Well, then, I can only say—what is perfectly true—that I have not read a word of your pamphlet. One thing, however, is very annoying: those confounded juries object to a beard; I shall have to cut mine off if I am to appear before one."

"Come, my dear Amphitryon," said the editor of the *Écho de la Bièvre*, "sit down again. We will bolster you up. I have an article ready written that will make a commotion among the peat-sellers, and that honorable corporation is a power."

"No, gentlemen, no!" cried Thuillier. "Such a man as I cannot rest half an hour under the imputation that has fallen on me. Go on without us; I hope to return shortly. Are you coming, la Peyrade?"

"He really is too funny!" said Barbet, as Thuillier and his friend went away. "Fancy leaving your breakfast im-

mediately after the oysters to go talk to a figure-head of a judge! Come on, gentlemen, close up," he added with spirit.

"Hello!" said one of the famishing journalists, who had been looking down into the garden of the Palais Royal commanded by the window of their room, "there goes Barbanchu. Suppose I were to call him up?"

"Why, to be sure! 'a gentleman of position requires a substitute,'" said Barbet, in parody of an advertisement common enough on the walls.

"Barbanchu! Barbanchu!" shouted the self-styled journalist.

Barbanchu, wearing a queer, pointed hat, did not immediately discern from what cloud above him the voice fell on his ear.

"Up here," said the voice, which appeared to him from heaven, indeed, when he perceived that he was hailed by a man holding a glass of champagne.

Then, as he still seemed doubtful, he was greeted with a chorus: "Come up, old fellow, come up. There are good pickings!"

Thuillier, when he came out of the law courts, could indulge in no illusions. He was the object of a very serious prosecution, and the severity of the Judge's tone left him, at the same time, no hope of being treated with leniency.

Then, as always happens between accomplices when a deed done in partnership turns out badly, he pelted la Peyrade with bitter animadversions: "He had paid no attention to what he was writing; he had gone off at a canter on his insane Saint-Simonian notions! Little he cared for the consequences! *He* would not have to pay the fine and go to prison!" And then, when la Peyrade said that it did not seem to him a very serious matter, and that he would undertake to get a verdict in Thuillier's favor:

"Oh, of course, nothing can be simpler," he exclaimed. "All you see in the business is a case for a showy defence. But I am not going to trust my honor and my fortune in the

hands of a feather-brain of your stamp. If the case comes to trial, I will secure a first-class man. I have had enough of your assistance, thank you!"

Under this storm of injustice, la Peyrade felt his temper rising. However, as he wished to avoid a rupture, he was helpless; he parted from Thuillier saying that he could forgive a man excited by fear, and that he would call in the course of the afternoon, when he hoped to find him calmer. Then they might discuss the steps it would be well to take.

So at about four o'clock the Provençal went to the house on the Boulevard de la Madeleine. Thuillier's irritation had subsided, but had given way to frightful consternation. If he had been expecting to be led to the scaffold in half an hour's time, he could not have been more crushed and dejected.

When la Peyrade went in, Madame Thuillier was administering some lime-flower tea. The poor woman had shaken off her apathy, and was proving herself a true Eponina to her Sabinus.

As for Brigitte, who presently came in, herself carrying a foot-bath, she was merciless and unmeasured in her speech; her abuse, bitter and virulent out of all proportion to the lawyer's fault—supposing him to have committed one,—would have enraged the mildest of men. La Peyrade saw that he had lost his footing in the Thuilliers' house, where they seemed only too glad of an excuse for throwing him over and for indulging in the most odious ingratitude. On a satirical taunt as to his success in obtaining honors for his friends, he rose and took leave, without any attempt on their part to detain him.

After pacing the pavement for a little while, the Provençal, in the midst of his indignation, suddenly remembered Madame de Godollo, for, to tell the truth, since their first interview his thoughts had often dwelt on the fair foreigner.

Not once only had she abruptly retired, when on reaching the Thuilliers' he had found her there. The manœuvre

had been repeated every time they had met; and without fully understanding what she would be at, la Peyrade had assured himself that this marked avoidance of him must mean anything rather than indifference. It would have been ill-judged to call again on the lady too soon after his first visit; but by this time a long enough period had elapsed for him to appear as a man entirely master of himself. So he turned back, and without asking at the porter's door if the Countess were at home, he went in as if he were going back to the Thuilliers', and rang at the door of the entresol.

As on the first occasion, the maid desired him to wait while she informed her mistress; but the room into which he was shown was not the dining-room, but another small room arranged as a library.

He was kept there a long time; he did not know what to think. At the same time he comforted himself by reflecting that if he was to be dismissed, the lady would not have taken so long to think about it.

At last the woman returned, but not to show him in.

"Madame la Comtesse," said she, "is particularly engaged, and begs that monsieur will be good enough to wait, and to amuse himself with some of the books, as she may be delayed longer than she would wish."

The excuse, in fact and in form, being by no means discouraging, the lawyer proceeded to act on the advice given him to avoid being dull. Without having to open either of the carved rosewood bookcases, which contained some of the most beautifully bound books he had ever seen, he found on the long table with turned legs and a green cloth a mixed collection of books, ample to feed the mind of a man whose thoughts were probably otherwise engaged.

But as he opened, one by one, the volumes left at his command, he thought he had been intentionally left to the torments of Tantalus; one was English, another German, a third Russian; there was even a book in Turkish characters. Was this a polyglot practical joke?

At last a book claimed his attention. The binding, unlike that of the works which to him were as sealed letters, was not so much handsome as smart. All by itself, on a corner of the table far from its companions, it lay back upwards, the open page spread out on the table-cloth, like a tent. La Peyrade took it up, careful to note the page which the last reader evidently meant to keep open.

It was an illustrated edition of Monsieur Scribe's works; the print that turned up under the lawyer's eyes represented the chief scene of a little piece played at the Gymnase, *A Woman's Hatred.*

Few of my gentle readers, no doubt, are unacquainted with the upshot of this drama, suggested—so the story goes—to the illustrious writer of so many plays by a speech he heard uttered one day by his porter's wife:

"There are some women," said she, "who make believe to spit in the dish, so as to disgust others and get it all to themselves."

In point of fact the chief figure in *La haîne d'une Femme* is a young widow, relentlessly persecuting a poor young man who does not know which way to turn. Everybody believes that she hates him mortally. By her mischief-making she almost destroys his reputation, and spoils a rich match he might have made; but it is only, after all, to give him far more than she has robbed him of; for she ends by marrying him herself, and making a husband of the man who had been pitied as her victim.

If it was chance that had isolated this volume and opened it at the precise spot where la Peyrade had found it face downward, it must be granted, after all that had passed between him and the Countess, that chance is sometimes clever and ingenious.

As he considered the deep meaning that might underlie this circumstance, fortuitous or not, la Peyrade read a few pages to see whether, in parts as much as in the whole, the allusion fitted his predicament. While he was reading with some interest, if not with absorbed attention, he heard doors

open and shut, and the lawyer, recognizing the fair Hungarian's silvery voice and rather indifferent tone, perceived that she was seeing somebody to the door.

"So I may promise the Ambassadress," said the lady's visitor—and the visitor was a man,—"that you will honor her ball this evening with your presence?"

"Yes, Commander, if my headache, which at this moment seems a little better, will only do me the favor of disappearing altogether."

"Till this evening then, most adorable of your sex," said the gentleman.

Then the doors shut again and silence reigned as before.

The title of Commander was reassuring to la Peyrade, for it is not one in common use by youthful sparks. Still, he was curious to know who the person might be who could take up so much of the lady's time. Hearing nobody, the lawyer went to the window which looked out on the street and cautiously opened the curtain, ready to drop it instantly at the least sound, and to turn round so as not to be caught in the very fact of vulgar curiosity. A handsome brougham, in waiting a little way off, drew up, a footman in a showy but well-appointed livery flew to open the door, and a little old man, very brisk and dandified, though he was one of those rare surviving relics of the past who have not discarded hair-powder, stepped lightly into the carriage, which drove off at a swift pace. La Peyrade had just time to observe a long row of orders. This rainbow of ribbon, added to the powdered wig, left no doubt as to the wearer being a personage of diplomatic rank.

La Peyrade had had time to return to his book, for in any case he thought it well to be "discovered" reading, when a bell was rung, and a minute after a maid appeared to announce that his long waiting had come to an end. When desired by the damsel to follow her, Théodose took care to replace the volume as he had found it, and a moment later he was in the Countess' presence.

There was a trace of suffering on the lady's handsome

features, but this did not impair her charms. On the sofa where she sat there lay an open letter, written on gilt-edged paper in a free and space-loving hand which betrayed it as having emanated from some minister's cabinet or government office. In her hand she held a cut-glass bottle with a chased gold top, and she sat inhaling from it; a strong smell of aromatic vinegar was predominant over all the other scents in the room.

"You are not well, madame," said la Peyrade anxiously.

"Oh, it is nothing," said the Countess, "a headache—I very often have one. But you, monsieur, where have you been? I was beginning to give up all hope of ever seeing you again. Have you come to give me some great news? The date of your marriage to Mademoiselle Colleville must now be near enough to be announced to everybody."

This opening somewhat disconcerted la Peyrade.

"I should have supposed you, madame," replied he a little stiffly, "to be sufficiently familiar with what goes on in the Thuilliers' household to know that nothing of the sort is imminent; nay, I may say, at present even probable."

"No, indeed, I assure you I know nothing. I firmly resolved not to appear to take any interest in an affair with which I had so foolishly mixed myself up; I talk to Mademoiselle Brigitte of anything and everything excepting Céleste's marriage."

"And it was, I suppose, to leave me at full liberty to discuss the subject, that you always made your escape whenever I had the honor to meet you at our friend's house."

"Why, yes," said the Countess, "that, no doubt, was the reason why I made way for you. Why else should I be so coy?"

"Oh, madame, a lady may avoid a man for many other reasons! For instance, he may have offended her; he may not have shown due respect and submission in acting on the advice she has so greatly honored him by giving."

"Oh, my dear sir, I am not so ardent a proselytizer as to take offence when my advice is not followed. Like other

people, I am quite capable of taking a mistaken view of the case."

"But, on the contrary, madame, as regards my marriage, your view was the correct one."

"Indeed?" said the lady quickly. "Has the attack on the pamphlet, following so closely on the delay in securing the Cross, led to a rupture?"

"No," said la Peyrade, "my influence in the Thuilliers' house rests on a firmer foundation. Compared with the services I have done to Mademoiselle Brigitte and her brother, these little disasters, happily reparable——"

"Do you think so?" interrupted the Countess, with an air of incredulity.

"No doubt," answered la Peyrade. "For if Madame la Comtesse du Bruel takes it into her head to secure the red ribbon, in spite of the difficulties that have stood in the way of her good-will, she is quite able to obtain a thing which, after all, is not beyond human attainment."

The Countess listened with a smile to this remark, but shook her head doubtfully.

"Why, madame, only a few days since, the Countess told Madame Colleville that this unexpected check had piqued her pride, and that she would herself apply to the Minister."

"Ah, but you forget that the law has intervened, and it is not usual to wait till a man has stood at the bar before giving him the ribbon of the Order. This seizure—it does not seem to have struck you—argues some ill-feeling, which you do not quite appreciate, against Monsieur Thuillier, and perhaps against you, monsieur, for you are the real culprit. The authorities do not seem, on the present occasion, to have acted independently."

La Peyrade looked at the Countess.

"I must own," said he, after a hasty glance, "that I have tried in vain to find in the document in question any excuse for the attack of which it has been the object."

"In my opinion, too," said the lady, "the King's supporters must have a very lively imagination to convince

themselves that they had a seditious pamphlet to deal with; but this is only additional proof of the powerful underground influence which vitiates all your efforts for the benefit of our worthy Monsieur Thuillier."

"And you, madame, know our secret foes?"

"Perhaps," said the Countess, smiling again.

"Madame," said la Peyrade, with agitation, "if I might venture to utter a suspicion——?"

"Speak," replied Madame de Godollo, "I do not object to your guessing right."

"Well, madame, our enemies—Thuillier's and mine—are —a woman."

"What then?" said the Countess. "Do you know how many lines of a man's writing Richelieu required in order to hang him?"

"Four," said Théodose.

"Then you can understand that a pamphlet of more than two hundred pages should have afforded matter for prosecution in the hands of a woman who has some little skill in—intrigue."

"I understand everything, madame," cried la Peyrade vehemently. "I know her for a woman in ten thousand, with as much mischievous wit as Richelieu himself; for an adorable witch who cannot only set the police and gendarmes in motion, but freeze a Cross, that is about to drop, to the minister's fingers."

"Well, then," said the lady, "of what use is it to struggle?"

"I struggle no more," said la Peyrade, calculating the measure of her regard for him by the immense pains she had been at. Then, with an air of assumed contrition, he added:

"But, bless me, madame, you must hate me very bitterly."

"Not so bitterly as you might suppose," answered the Countess; "but, after all, supposing I did?"

"Ah, madame!" cried Théodose rapturously, "I should be the happiest of ill-starred wretches, for such hatred would

be a thousand times more precious and delightful to me than your indifference. But you do not hate me: why should you feel for me that thrice-blessed feminine aversion which Scribe, in one of his gems for the Gymnase, has described with so much subtle wit?"

Madame de Godollo did not immediately reply; she looked down, and a little flutter in her breathing slightly shook her voice.

"And can a man of your stoical temper be frivolous enough to trouble himself about a woman's hatred?" she asked.

"Yes, indeed, madame, I should trouble myself a great deal; not to rebel against it; on the contrary, to bless the severity which vouchsafed to chasten me. My fair foe once known and confessed, I should not despair of moving her to pity, for never again would I tread in a path that was not hers, nor march under a banner she had not taken for her own; I should not think till she inspired me, nor have any will but hers; I should act only when she ordered, and be in all things her auxiliary, nay, more, her slave; were she to spurn me with her tiny foot, to punish me with her white hand, I should endure all things with joy. As the reward of so much submission and obedience, I should crave but one favor, that of being allowed to kiss the print of the foot that had repulsed me, of shedding all my tears in the hand that had struck me!"

While pouring out this long outcry of an ecstatic and distracted heart, wrung from the impressionable Provençal nature by the joy of hoped-for triumph, he had glided from his seat, and at the end found himself kneeling on one knee at a little distance from the Countess—an attitude recognized on the stage, and which is still less rare than might be thought in private life.

"Rise, monsieur," said the Countess, "and have the goodness to answer me." She fixed a searching eye on his face, and knitting her handsome brows, "Have you," she asked, "carefully weighed the purport of the words you have just

spoken? Have you gauged their depth and all they pledge you to? Are you the man to do all they promise, your hand on your heart and conscience; are you not one of those perfidiously humble men who affect to embrace our knees only the better to throw our reason and will off its balance?"

"I!" cried la Peyrade, "shall I ever regret the fascination which you exercised over me from the moment when we first met? Nay, madame, the more I have rebelled and struggled against it, the more should you believe in its reality and its absolute supremacy. What I said I meant; what I have just now thought aloud, I have thought to myself from the hour when I was so happy as to be admitted to your presence; and the long days I have spent in fighting against the attraction, have produced a reactionary strength of will which knows its own mind, and which your utmost severity cannot now discourage."

"My severity—perhaps not," said the Countess. "But my favors are another matter. Question yourself closely. We foreigners do not understand the levity with which French women often treat even the most solemn engagements. To us, the word 'yes' is a sacred bond, our word is a pledge, we wish nothing and do nothing by halves. A motto attached to the arms of my family has much meaning here, *All or nothing*. This is saying much, and yet hardly enough."

"Oh, I am quite of the same mind," replied the lawyer, "and my first act on leaving this house will be to break, once for all, every link with that ignoble past, which for a moment, I seemed to place in the scale against the intoxicating future which you do not forbid me to hope for."

"No, no," said the Countess, "I do not like hasty freaks; it will not flatter me in the least that you should fly round breaking windows. These Thuilliers are not bad souls; they humiliated you quite unconsciously; they live in another world from yours. Is that their fault? Untie the knot, do not break it, and above all, pause to reflect once more. Your conversion to a belief in me is so recent! What man can be sure of what his heart will say to-morrow?"

"I, madame, am that man. We men of the south do not love *à la Française.*"

"But I thought that the feeling under discussion as between us was hatred," said the Countess, with a bewitching smile.

"Nay, madame, even when it is translated and understood, there is something terrible in the word. Tell me, rather, not that you love me, but that the words you condescended to speak at our former meeting were the true expression of your feelings."

"My friend," said the Countess, emphasizing the word. "one of your moralists has said: 'There are some persons who when they say that a thing *is* or *is not,* need take no oath; their character promises for them.' Be good enough to believe that I am one of them."

And she held out her hand to the lawyer with a gesture as modest as it was graceful.

La Peyrade, beside himself, rushed at the hand, and devoured it with kisses.

"Enough, child," said the lady, gently disengaging her imprisoned fingers. "Good-bye, till we meet again. I believe my headache is quite well."

La Peyrade took up his hat and rushed to the door; but there he stopped, and cast a long and tender look at the enchantress.

The Countess bowed him a charming farewell, but as la Peyrade seemed about to retrace his steps, she warned him with her finger to be good, and go away. He finally left. On the stairs he paused to exhale, as it were, the overflowing joy of his heart. The Countess' words, and the ingenuity with which she had prepared him to divine her feelings, seemed to him to guarantee their sincerity, and he departed in faith.

Given over to the intoxication of happiness, which betrays itself not only in the victim's appearance, looks, and manner, but sometimes even in actions which reason could not strictly approve, after pausing for a minute on the stairs, he went up far enough to see the entrance to the Thuilliers' apartments.

"At last," he cried, "I see glory, fortune, and happiness within my grasp; and, even better, I may know the joys of revenge! After Cérizet and Dutocq, I will crush you, vile and vulgar brood!"

And he shook his fist at the innocent double doors.

Then he ran down and away, and the common phrase at this moment was true of him; his feet seemed not to touch the earth.

The very next morning, for la Peyrade could no longer contain the storm that swelled within him, he went to call on the Thuilliers. He arrived there in the bitterest and most hostile frame of mind. Imagine, then, his bewilderment when, before he had time to parry the demonstration of reconciliation and oblivion, Thuillier rushed into his arms.

"My dear fellow," cried the ex-clerk, when he relaxed his embrace, "my political fortune is made; every paper, without exception, speaks of the seizure of my pamphlet, and you should see what the organs of the Opposition have to say to the Government."

"It is quite natural," said the lawyer, not entering into this enthusiasm, "you are something to write about. But that does not in the least mend the matter, and the legal authorities will be all the more determined to get an adverse verdict, as they say."

"Well, then," said Thuillier, drawing himself up proudly, "I will go to prison—like Béranger, like Lamennais, like Armand Carrel."

"My good sir, persecution is a beautiful thing—at a distance; but when you hear the big bolts shut upon you, believe me the position will not smile on your fancy."

"In the first place," said Thuillier, "political prisoners are never refused leave to serve their time in a private asylum, and, as yet, I am not sentenced; you yourself only yesterday thought I might hope to be acquitted."

"Yes; but since then I have heard things that make it seem very doubtful. The same hand, no doubt, that withheld

the Cross, came down on your pamphlet. You are being murdered of malice prepense."

"Since you know who this dangerous enemy is," said Thuillier, "you will, I suppose, not decline to name him."

"I do not know," answered la Peyrade, "but I suspect. This is what comes of finessing."

"Of finessing?" said Thuillier, with the natural animosity of a man whose conscience is absolutely clear of the fault he is accused of.

"Certainly," replied the lawyer. "You have used Céleste as a sort of decoy-bird to tempt flutterers to your house. It is not every one who is so long-suffering as Monsieur Godeschal, who, after his dismissal, behaved so generously in the matter of the sale."

"Explain yourself," said Thuillier. "I do not understand you in the least."

"Nothing can be easier to understand. How many suitors—without counting me—are there for the hand of Mademoiselle Colleville? Godeschal, Minard, Félix Phellion, Olivier Vinet, the judge's deputy,—men who have all been kept dangling, just as I have been."

"Olivier Vinet!" cried Thuillier, struck as by a ray of light. "To be sure; that is the quarter the blow comes from His father, they say, has a long arm. But can it be said that we have kept him dangling, to use your very unseemly phrase? He spent one evening here, and has made no proposal; no more, indeed, has the younger Minard, or young Phellion. Godeschal is the only man who ventured to come to the point, and he was refused without hesitation; he was not kept on tenterhooks."

"Very true," said la Peyrade, still bent on quarreling. "It is only when a man speaks out decisively that there is any point in playing fast and loose with him."

"Come," said Thuillier, "out with it. Whom are you talking at with these insinuations? Did you not settle everything with Brigitte the other day? You have chosen a good time, I must say, to come to me about your love-affairs, when the sword of justice is hanging over my head."

"Oh, I dare say!" said la Peyrade ironically. "Now you want to make capital of your interesting position as a man attacked by the law. I knew just what would happen, and that when once the pamphlet was finished you would be at your tricks again."

"The pamphlet indeed!" said Thuillier. "I like your assuming that it was to be the end of every difficulty, when it is, on the contrary, at the bottom of all these deplorable complications."

"Deplorable? Why? Your political fortune is made."

"Really and truly, my dear boy," said Thuillier sentimentally, "I never could have thought that you would choose the evil hour of adversity to come and hold a pistol to my head, and make me the object of your vexatious remarks."

"Well done!" cried la Peyrade. "Now it is 'the evil hour of adversity,' and not a minute ago you threw yourself into my arms like a man who has had some unlooked-for good fortune. You must really make up your mind whether you are a man to be pitied or gloriously triumphant."

"You may be as sharp as you please," retorted Thuillier, "you will not prove that I have contradicted myself. I am logical, at any rate, though I may not be clever. It is very natural that I should be comforted by finding public opinion pronouncing in my favor, and affording me in the papers every proof of respectful sympathy. But, on the whole, do you not suppose that I would rather have seen things take their course? As I see myself the object of low malignity on the part of men so influential as the Vinets, can I foresee the extent of the dangers to which I may be exposed?"

"So you are definitively *Jean qui pleure*—in doleful dumps?" said la Peyrade, with pitiless insistency.

"Yes," replied Thuillier solemnly, "*Jean qui pleure* over a friendship which I had believed to be genuine and sincere, and which, when I need its help, has nothing to give but satire."

"What help?" asked la Peyrade. "Did you not tell me yesterday that you had had enough of my collaboration in any

form? I offered to plead your case; you told me you would secure some eminent counsel."

"Very true; in the first moment of dismay at such an unexpected blow, I may have made such a foolish speech; but on due reflection, who is better qualified than you to explain the meaning of a document written by your own pen? I was indeed beside myself yesterday; and you, to-day, with your offended conceit that cannot forgive a hasty impulse, are very caustic and cruel."

"So you apply to me, formally, to defend you before the jury?"

"Why, yes, my dear boy; I see no other man in whose hands I can trust my case. I might pay some bigwig of the bar an enormous fee and he would not defend me so skilfully as you will."

"Well, and now I refuse. The parts, as you perceive, are reversed. I, like you, thought yesterday that I was the man for this case; to-day, I think that what you need is, in fact, some bigwig of the law, since with Vinet as your antagonist, the affair has assumed such importance as will load the advocate who undertakes it with really overwhelming responsibilities."

"I quite understand," retorted Thuillier; "your Worship always dreamed of a seat on the bench, and it will not do to run any risk of quarreling with the man who is already spoken of as a likely Keeper of the Seals. That is very prudent—but I do not see how it will further your prospects of marriage."

"That is to say," replied la Peyrade, catching the ball at the rebound, "that to snatch you from the clutches of the jury is a sort of thirteenth labor of Hercules which you set before me, before I can win Mademoiselle Colleville's hand. I was prepared to find that your demands would increase in proportion to the devotion I might prove; but I am tired of it; and to put an end to this utilization of man by man, I came here this morning to give you back your word. You may dispose of Céleste's hand as you please; so far as I am concerned, I make no claim on it."

The abrupt tone of this unexpected declaration left Thuillier speechless and voiceless; all the more so because at this moment Brigitte came into the room. The good woman's mood had also changed considerably since yesterday, for her opening words were full of affectionate familiarity.

"So here you are!" said she to la Peyrade, "our good young lawyer!"

"Good-morning to you, mademoiselle," said the Provençal, stiffly.

"Well," she went on, not heeding la Peyrade's ceremonious greeting, "the Government has put its foot in it by seizing your pamphlet. You should see how hot the papers give it to them this morning. Here," she went on, handing a sheet to Thuillier printed on flimsy paper in large but not very legible type; "here is one you have not seen yet; the porter has just brought it up. A paper printed in our old quarter, *l'Écho de la Bièvre*. I do not know whether you gentlemen will agree with me, but the article strikes me as capitally written. But it is queer how careless these journalists are; they spell your name without an *h*; I think you might complain."

Thuillier took the paper and read the article with which gratitude for a well-filled stomach had inspired the editor of the tanner's organ. Never in her life had Brigitte troubled her head about a newspaper excepting to consider whether the sheet were large enough for wrapping the parcel for which she used it; but now, suddenly converted to faith in the press by her strong affection for her brother, she stood behind Thuillier, and reading over his shoulder the more important passages of the article she had thought so eloquent, she pointed them out with her finger.

"Yes," said Thuillier, refolding the paper, "it is warmly expressed and highly flattering to me. But here we have quite another matter on hand. Our gentleman here declares that he refuses to plead my case, and that he gives up all idea of marrying Céleste."

"That is to say that he will give it up," answered Brigitte, "unless as soon as the case is over he is married at once and out of hand. Well, for my part, I think the poor boy's demand only reasonable. When he has done that one thing more for us there can be no further reprieve, and whether Mademoiselle Céleste likes it or no, she must make the best of it, for, after all, everything must have an end."

"You hear, my dear fellow," said la Peyrade, taking up Brigitte's words, "when I have defended you, then I am to be married. Your sister is frankness itself, and does not beat about the bush."

"Beat about the bush!" echoed Brigitte. "Not I, indeed, do you think it? I say what I mean; the laborer has worked, he must be paid for his pains."

"Do hold your tongue," said Thuillier, stamping his foot, "every word you utter twists the dagger in the wound."

"The dagger in the wound; what do you mean?" asked Brigitte. "What! you have not quarreled?"

"I told you," said Thuillier, "that la Peyrade has come to cry off the bargain; and the reason he gives is that we are asking him to do us a still further service before granting him Céleste's hand. He thinks he has done us enough as it is."

"He has done us good service, no doubt," replied Brigitte, "but I do not see that we have been ungrateful. After all, it was he who got us into the scrape and I should think it very queer if he now left us in the lurch."

"Your argument, my dear lady, would have some semblance of cogency if I were the only advocate in Paris; but as the streets are paved with them, and as Thuillier himself said yesterday he would prefer a man of distinction at the bar, I do not scruple to refuse undertaking his defence. Then, as to the marriage we spoke of, to prevent its ever again being made an excuse for some vulgar and mercenary bargain, I decline it in formal and emphatic terms, and there is nothing to hinder Mademoiselle Colleville from accepting all that Monsieur Phellion has to offer."

"Do not trouble yourself, my dear sir," replied Brigitte. "If that is your last word, we shall have no difficulty about finding a husband for Céleste, young Phellion or another; but you will allow me to say that the reason you give is not the true one, for we cannot dance faster than the fiddler can play. If we settled on the marriage this very day the banns must be published. You have wit enough to see that the mayor cannot marry you till the formalities are carried out, and between this and then Thuillier's case will be tried."

"Yes," said la Peyrade. "And if I lose his case it will be my fault that Thuillier will be sent to prison, just as it was I who yesterday had been the cause of the seizure of the pamphlet."

"Hang it all, but it seems to me that if you had written nothing, the police would have nothing to grab."

"My dear sister," said Thuillier, as la Peyrade answered with a shrug, "your argument is unsound in so far as that the document was in no way incriminating. It is not la Peyrade's fault if personages in high position organized a persecution against me. Do you remember that little man, Monsieur Olivier Vinet, whom Cardot brought to our house one evening; he and his father are furious, it would seem, because we did not think of him for Céleste, and they have vowed to ruin me."

"And why did we refuse him," asked Brigitte, "but for this gentleman's sake? For, after all, a Judge's deputy in Paris is a very good match."

"No doubt," said la Peyrade coolly, "but he had not quite a million to contribute to the common stock."

"Come!" said Brigitte, firing up. "If you are going to talk about the house you enabled us to purchase, I, for my part, will tell you plainly that if you had had ready money enough yourself to sneak it from the notary, you would not have come to us. You need not think that I was altogether your dupe; you talked big just now about driving a bargain, but it was you yourself who proposed it: 'Give me Céleste,'

said you, 'and I will give you the house.' That was what you gave us to understand in so many words; and after all we had to make greater sacrifices than we had expected."

"Now, now, Brigitte," said Thuillier, "you are stickling over trifles!"

"Trifles! Trifles, indeed!" cried Brigitte. "Was the sum at first named exceeded, or was it not?"

"My dear Thuillier," said la Peyrade, "I, like you, regard the matter as settled, and useless repetitions can only lead to bitterness. My determination was final before I came here; all I hear only confirms it. I shall not be your *son-in-law*, but we shall, nevertheless, remain fast friends."

And he rose to go.

"One minute, Monsieur l'avocat," said Brigitte, stopping the way. "There is one matter, which, so far as I am concerned, is by no means settled; and as we no longer are to have any purse in common, I should not be sorry if you would be so good as to tell me what became of a little sum of ten thousand francs which Thuillier handed over to you, to be paid to some rascally officials for the Cross of which we have heard so much and seen nothing?"

"Brigitte!" said Thuillier, in an agony, "you have a hell-fire tongue. You ought to have known nothing about that; I told you about it in a fit of temper and you promised never to utter a word about it to any one whomsoever."

"True, but we are parting company," answered the implacable old maid. "Well, when partners part they pay. Ten thousand francs! I should have thought a real Cross dear at the money; and for a Cross in the clouds, this gentleman must admit it is a very large price."

"La Peyrade, my dear friend," said Thuillier, going up to the lawyer, who was white with rage, "do not listen to Brigitte; her affection for me is too much for her judgment. I know what offices are; and I should not be surprised if you had paid even more out of your own pocket."

"Monsieur," said la Peyrade, "it is not in my power, unfortunately, to send you at once the sum which I am required

to account for, with such insolent brutality. But grant me a brief delay, and if, to encourage your patience, you will accept my note of hand, I am ready to sign one."

"Get along with your note of hand," said Thuillier, "you owe me nothing; we are in your debt, for Cardot told me that your profit on this splendid property, which you enabled us to buy, ought to be ten thousand francs at the very least."

"Cardot! Cardot!" said Brigitte scornfully, "he is free enough with other people's money! He was to have had Céleste—something better than ten thousand francs!"

La Peyrade was too great an actor not to turn this humiliating conclusion into an effective finale. With tears in his voice, and ere long in his eyes, he addressed Brigitte.

"Mademoiselle," said he, "when I first had the honor of being admitted to your house I was poor; and for a long time after you saw me depressed and ill at ease, because I knew that poverty exposes a man to every sort of indignity. From the day when I was enabled to show you the way to a fortune I did not covet for myself, I recovered a little confidence, and your kindness, too, encouraged me to shake off my shyness and abasement. To-day, then, when I am taking a loyal step which must relieve you of much anxiety, for, if you would be honest, you would confess that you have dreamed of another husband for Céleste, we might have agreed to give up a plan which my delicacy of feeling prohibits my carrying out, and yet have remained friends. All that was needed was that we should remain on such terms of politeness as you may see in an example daily before you; for, although Madame de Godollo has not any great kindness for me, I am sure that her good breeding would not allow her to approve of your odious behavior. But, thank heaven! I have some religious feeling. The gospel is not a dead letter to me, so understand me clearly, mademoiselle, I forgive you. Not to Thuillier, who would not accept the money, but to *you*, as my revenge, I will shortly repay the ten thousand francs which you believe me to have appropriated to my own needs. When the sum is in your own hands, if you should

repent of your unjust suspicions and scruple to keep it, you can hand it over to some benevolent society——"

"A benevolent society!" cried Brigitte, interrupting him. "Thank you for nothing! To be given to a crowd of ne'er-do-weels and bigots, who spend it in feasting after taking the sacrament. I have been poor myself, my boy; for a very long time I made bags to hold other people's money before I had any of my own. I have money now and I keep it; so as soon as you please I am ready to take it. If you do not know how to carry through a business when you undertake it, and waste powder and shot on cock-sparrows, so much the worse for you."

Seeing that he had failed in his purpose, and had not even scored the granite of which Brigitte was made, la Peyrade, with a scornful glance, made a dignified exit.

He saw that Thuillier's impulse was to detain him, but an imperious movement of Brigitte's, always queen and mistress, had riveted him to the spot.

As soon as he got home, the lawyer completed his emancipation my writing to Madame Colleville that, as his engagement to Céleste was broken off, he thought that ordinary propriety, as well as good feeling, prohibited his being seen at her house any more.

As Colleville made his way to the office next morning, he called on la Peyrade to ask him what nonsense he had been writing to Flavie that had reduced her to despair. Théodose very solemnly repeated to the husband the words of the letter he had written to the wife—certainly not a love-letter.

"And that is what you call friendship?" said Colleville, with the friendly *tu* that he had long been in the habit of using to la Peyrade. "You will not marry the daughter; is that a reason for quarreling with her parents? It is making us answerable for the words you may have had with Thuillier. Is that any concern of ours? Has not my wife been invariably kind to you?"

"Indeed," said la Peyrade, "I have received nothing but kindness from Madame Colleville."

"And so you want to see her die of grief? Since yesterday she has constantly had her handkerchief in her hand. I tell you she will really be ill."

"Listen, my dear Colleville," replied the lawyer. "I owe it to you to tell you the truth, and you have a right to be told it. Besides the fact that I could not meet Mademoiselle Céleste——"

"Well, you need never meet her," interrupted the worthy man. "When you come to the house, the child can retire to her own room. Besides, she will be married before long."

"No doubt. But I ought to add that my frequent visits to your house have been talked about; calumnious reports have got about. It is alike my duty and my desire to put a stop to them."

"What!" exclaimed the husband. "Can a man of your sense listen to such absurd gossip? Do you fancy that you stop tongues wagging? Why, my wife has been talked about for five and twenty years, only because she is rather better looking than Brigitte and Madame Thuillier. I must be a greater ruffian than you, for all this tittle-tattle has never troubled our household peace for a quarter of an hour."

"Well," said la Peyrade, "while I admire you for being so strong-minded, I think such a contempt of public opinion very rash."

"What next!" said Colleville. "Public opinion! I trample it in the dust—a lying hussy. It is Minard who keeps such reports afloat, because his fat cook of a wife never attracted the attention of any decent man. Monsieur le Maire would do far better to keep an eye on his son, who is ruining himself with an elderly actress from *Bobino's.*"

"At any rate, my dear good fellow," said la Peyrade, "try to bring Flavie to her senses."

"Ah! that's better," said Colleville, wringing the lawyer's hand. "You call her Flavie in the old way. I have found my friend again."

"Certainly," said la Peyrade, in a calmer tone, "friends once are friends for ever."

"Yes, yes; friends are friends," repeated Colleville. "A gift of the gods, to console us for all the vexations of life. Then it is an understood thing, you will call on my wife and restore my unhappy home to gladness and serenity?"

La Peyrade vaguely acquiesced, and when his importunate guest had departed, he wondered whether this type of husband —which is far commoner than might be supposed—was genuine, or mere acting.

Just as la Peyrade was about to lay at the Countess' feet the liberty he had so violently snatched at, he received a scented note which set his heart beating; he recognized on the seal the famous motto, "All or nothing," which had been proposed to him as the rule that was to govern the intimacy he hoped for.

"Dear monsieur," said Madame de Godollo, "I have heard of your determination; many thanks! But I must now prepare to carry out mine, for you cannot suppose that I intend to live for ever in a sphere that is so far from being ours, and to which I have no ties. To make some arrangements, so as not to have to explain how it is that the entresol is open to the voluntary exile from the first floor, I must have to-day and to-morrow to myself; so do not come to see me till the day after to-morrow. By that time I shall have settled with Brigitte, as they say on 'change, and shall have much to tell you.

"Tua tota,

"Comtesse de Godollo."

Wholly yours, in Latin, struck la Peyrade as charming; nor did it surprise him, Latin being almost a second national tongue in Hungary. The two days' delay to which he was condemned added fuel to the fire of passion that possessed him; and when, on the second day, he arrived at the house near the Madeleine, his love had arrived at a height of incandescence of which he could not have believed himself capable a few days sooner.

This time the porter's wife caught sight of him as he went in. But, irrespective of the fact that he might be supposed to be going up to the Thuilliers, he would not have cared if the real object of his visit had been known. The ice was broken, his happiness was recognized, and he felt more inclined to proclaim it to all comers than to make a mystery of it.

Flying nimbly up the stairs, the lawyer was about to pull the bell, when, on putting out his hand to take the silken cord by the side of the door, he noticed that the bell-pull was gone.

La Peyrade's first idea was that some attack which makes every kind of noise unendurable to the sufferer might account for the absence of the missing cord; but various observations at once presented themselves to weaken this hypothesis, which, indeed, would not have been particularly consolatory.

From the hall to the Countess' door there used to be a stair-carpet, held at each step by a brass rod, and affording visitors a velvety ascent; this carpet had disappeared.

An outer door, covered with green worsted velvet and trimmed with gilt fillets, had guarded the entrance; of this no sign but a little damage done to the wall by the workmen who had removed it.

For an instant the lawyer, in his agitation, fancied he had mistaken the floor; but glancing over the banisters he saw that he had indeed stopped at the entresol. Then Madame de Godollo was moving!

The Provençal made up his mind that he must rap at the fine lady's door just as if she were a pretty milliner; but his knuckles only produced that hollow echo which proves vacancy within, *intonuere cavernæ,* and at the same moment he perceived, under the door on which he now hit with his fist, that streak of daylight which betrays deserted rooms when curtains, carpets, and furniture are gone, and there is nothing to deaden sound or subdue the sunshine.

Compelled to acknowledge that the removal was an accomplished fact, la Peyrade concluded that, after a quarrel

with Brigitte, some virulence on the old maid's part had led to this radical and violent change; but why had he not been told, and what was this whim of leaving him to suffer from the absurd annoyance of coming on a fool's errand?

Before raising the siege, as if doubt were any longer possible, la Peyrade once more assaulted the door with noisy vehemence.

"Who is that knocking as if he meant to have the house down?" cried the porter's wife, brought to the foot of the stairs by the clatter.

"Does Madame de Godollo no longer live here?" asked la Peyrade.

"Certainly not, since she has left. If you had told me, sir, that you were going to see her, I could have saved you the trouble of kicking the door in."

"I knew she was leaving," said la Peyrade, not choosing to seem ignorant of her intentions, "but I had no idea she was to go so soon."

"She was in a hurry, I suppose," said the woman, "since she set off this morning with post-horses."

"With post-horses!" echoed la Peyrade, in dismay. "Then she has left Paris?"

"It is to be supposed so," said the dreadful woman. "It is not usual to have a postilion and horses to move from one part of Paris to another."

"And she did not say where she was going?"

"No, sir. You have a queer notion of things if you suppose that we are kept informed!"

"No; but, after all, if any letters should come for her after she has left?"

"I have orders to send them to Monsieur le Commandeur, the little old gentleman who came here so often; you must have met him, sir."

"Yes, yes, of course," said la Peyrade, preserving his presence of mind under this succession of shocks; "so that little old man in powder came almost every day?"

"Oh, not to say every day, but very often. Well, I have orders to send Madame la Comtesse's letters to him."

"And she left no message to any one else of her acquaintance; she gave you no instructions?"

"None whatever, sir."

"Thank you, my good lady, I am much obliged," said la Peyrade; and he turned to leave the house.

"But I fancy," added the porter's wife, "that mademoiselle knows more about it. Will you not go up to her? She is at home, and so is Monsieur Thuillier."

"No, it is of no consequence," said la Peyrade. "I came to give Madame de Godollo some information she had asked me to get. I have not time to stay."

"Well, as I tell you, she went off this morning with post-horses. Why, not two hours ago, you would have found her here, sir; but traveling post, she must be far enough away by this time."

With this trick of saying everything twice over, the woman, who had just given him such cruel information, seemed to insist on every detail which must torture him. He went away with despair in his heart. To say nothing of this abrupt disappearance, he was possessed by sudden jealousy, and at this acute stage of his overwhelming disappointment the most terrible explanations occurred to his mind.

After brief consideration, he thought the matter out.

"These diplomatic women," said he to himself, "are often charged with secret missions, in which perfect secrecy and extreme rapidity of movement are requisite." But then, with a sudden revulsion, "Supposing," thought he, "that she were one of those adventuresses whom foreign governments often employ as their secret agents. If the story, more or less suspicious, of the Russian Princess who was compelled to sell her furniture to Brigitte, were that also of my Hungarian lady! And yet," he reflected, as a third view presented itself to his brain, tormented by a frightful chaos of ideas and feelings, "her education, her manners, language, everything proclaims her a woman of position in the world. And then, if she were but a bird of passage, why should she be at so much pains to bewitch me?"

Thus for a long time would la Peyrade have gone on arguing for and against, if he had not felt himself seized from behind, while a voice he knew exclaimed:

"My dear sir, take care where you are going. You are on the very verge of a dreadful end, and are running headlong to it."

La Peyrade with a start found himself in Phellion's arms.

The scene occurred at the bottom of a house that was being pulled down, at the corner of the Rue Duphot and the Rue Saint-Honoré.

Phellion, standing on the pavement opposite—the reader may remember his mania for building "works"—had for a quarter of an hour been watching the drama of a wall about to be overthrown by the united efforts of a party of workmen; the great citizen, watch in hand, was calculating how many minutes longer the mass of stone and mortar would resist the subversive forces brought to bear on it.

It was at the most critical moment of the imminent downfall, that la Peyrade, absorbed in the turmoil of his thoughts, and heedless of the warnings addressed to him from all sides, had walked into the space where the *aerolite* would inevitably fall. Phellion—who would indeed have done as much for a stranger—had rushed to the rescue, and la Peyrade certainly owed to him his escape from a dreadful death, for at the very moment when he was dragged back by the vigorous inhabitant of the Quartier Latin, the wall came crashing down just in front of him, with the uproar of a cannon and a dense cloud of dust.

"Are you deaf and blind, man?" cried the workman placed on guard to warn the passers-by of danger, in a tone of voice that may be imagined.

"Thank you, my dear sir," said la Peyrade, coming down from the clouds. "But for you, I should have been crushed like an idiot."

And he wrung Phellion's hand.

"My reward," said Phellion, "is the satisfaction of having

snatched you from such imminent peril; and I may say that this satisfaction is not unmingled with pride, for I was not two seconds wrong in the calculation which had enabled me to foresee the instant when that formidable block was overbalanced from its centre of gravity. But what were you thinking about, my dear sir? Of your defence, no doubt, in this case of Thuillier's; for the public papers have informed me of the impending action to be taken by public vengeance against our highly estimable friend. But you will address the court in a noble cause, monsieur; with my hand on my conscience, and accustomed as I am by my labors as a member of the committee at the Odéon to judge of literary efforts, after reading some passages of the incriminating document, I cannot see that the tone of that pamphlet is such as to justify the rigorous measures that have been taken. Between you and me," added the great citizen, lowering his voice, "I confess it is a small-minded action on the part of the Government."

"That is my opinion too," said la Peyrade. "But I do not undertake the defence. I have advised Thuillier to secure the help of some celebrated counsel."

"That may be good advice," said Phellion. "And at any rate it does honor to your modesty. You have just seen our dear friend, no doubt? I called on him on the day when the bomb fell, and I am on my way to him now. I did not find him at home on my first visit; I only saw Brigitte, who was discussing the matter with Madame de Godollo. There is a woman of political purview! On my honor, she had foretold the catastrophe."

"You know that she has left Paris?" said la Peyrade, seizing an opening for coming back to the absorbing idea of the moment.

"Indeed! she is gone?" said Phellion. "Well, monsieur, though you and she were little in sympathy, I must tell you that I regard her departure as a misfortune. She will leave a great gap in our friends' drawing-room. I must say so, for I really think it, and I am not in the habit of disguising my feelings."

"Why, certainly," said la Peyrade, "she was a very remarkable woman, with whom I believe I should have come to an understanding in spite of her prejudices. But this morning, without leaving any trace as to whither she was going, she set out suddenly, posting."

"Ah! posting," replied Phellion. "I do not know whether you are of my mind, but that seems to me, monsieur, a very pleasant way of traveling; and Louis XI., to whom we owe the institution, had certainly a very clever idea, though in other respects, his despotic and sanguinary rule was not, according to my poor lights, absolutely above reproach.—Only once in my life have I availed myself of that mode of locomotion, and I must say I found it very superior, in spite of its relative slowness, to the mad career of a railway, on which rapidity is achieved only at the risk of the passengers and the tax-payers."

La Peyrade was paying little heed to Phellion's grandiloquence.

"Where can she have gone?" This was the thought he turned over and over in his mind, an absorbing thought which would have rendered him indifferent to a far more interesting discourse; but the great citizen, fairly started like a locomotive, went on steadily.

"It was the last time Madame Phellion was confined. She was in the country of le Perche with her mother, when I heard that serious complications had supervened with milk-fever. A wound in the pocket is never fatal, as they say, so, terrified by the danger that threatened my wife, I flew off to the coach-office to take steps to secure a place in the mail. Not one was to be had; they were all taken for a week to come. At once I made up my mind. I went off to the Rue Pigalle and for gold down I had succeeded in obtaining the use of a chaise and two horses, when the necessity for a passport, with which I had omitted to provide myself, and without which, by a decree of the Consulate of the 17th Nivose, Year XII., no traveler was to be allowed to take horses——"

But these words were as a flash of light to la Peyrade, and

without waiting for the end of the great citizen's posting Odyssey, he had set off in the direction of the Rue Pigalle, before Phellion, cut short in his speech, was fully aware of his disappearance.

But when he had reached the royal posting station, la Peyrade was not a little puzzled to know where he could apply for the information he had come to seek. So he was engaged in explaining to the office-porter that he had a letter of the greatest importance to transmit to a lady of his acquaintance; that this lady had been so heedless as to leave no address, and that he had thought he might learn her place of destination from the passport she must have shown before she could engage horses, when a postilion, sitting in the corner of the office where la Peyrade was making his inquiries, put his word in.

"Was it, now, a lady traveling with her maid, that I loaded up not far from the Madeleine?" he asked.

"The very thing," said la Peyrade, advancing eagerly and slipping a five-franc piece into this providential informant's hand.

"Bless me, but she's a rum sort of traveler," said the man. "She made me take her to the Bois de Boulogne, where we drove round and round for an hour. Then we pulled up at the Barrière de l'Étoile, where she gave me something handsome for myself, and took a cab, telling me to take the carriage back to a man she had hired it from in the Cour des Coches, Faubourg Saint-Honoré."

"And what is the man's name?" asked la Peyrade eagerly.

"Simonin," answered the postilion.

Armed with this information, la Peyrade set out again, and a quarter of an hour later he confronted the job master; but all the man knew was that a lady living near the Madeleine had hired a traveling carriage, without horses, for half a day; that it had been sent out at nine in the morning, and had been back in the coach-house by noon, brought home by a postilion from the Royal Office.

"Never mind," said la Peyrade. "I know now that she has

not left Paris, and is not avoiding me. She has made a pretence of setting out, to be rid, once for all, of the Thuilliers. Fool that I am! I dare say a letter is waiting for me at home, explaining everything."

Dead with fatigue and agitation, la Peyrade, to verify the truth of this idea as quickly as possible, got into a hackney cab; in less than a quarter of an hour, for he had promised good pay, he was set down in the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer.

Here again he had to endure the torments of waiting. Since Brigitte had ceased to live in the house, Monsieur Coffinet, the porter, neglected his duties, and when la Peyrade rushed to the lodge to get his letter, which, in fact, he could see in the pigeon-hole appropriated to his service, the porter and his wife were both absent and their door locked. The woman was busy doing the housework of one of the tenants, and Coffinet, taking advantage of the opportunity, had allowed himself to be tempted to a tavern in the neighborhood, where, between two noggins of wine, he was defending the cause of the householder against a republican who had small respect for proprietors.

It was fully twenty minutes before this worthy, remembering the property supposed to be in his charge, came back to resume his functions. The torrent of abuse vented on him by la Peyrade may be imagined. He excused himself, saying that he had been out on an errand by Mademoiselle's orders, and that he could not be at the same time in the lodge and running messages for his mistress.

At last he gave the lawyer a letter with the Paris stamp. It was his heart rather than his eyes that recognized the writing, and turning the letter over, the arms and motto assured him that he saw the end of the most cruel experience of his life.

To read the letter in the presence of this dreadful porter seemed to him sheer profanation; with a refinement of passion in which every lover will sympathize, he allowed himself the pleasure of postponing his happiness; he would not open

this thrice-blessed missive till, in his own rooms, with the doors shut, so that nothing could disturb him, he might be able to revel in the delicious sensations of which his heart already felt the foretaste.

Having flown up the stairs with a rush, the lawyer was childish enough to lock himself in, and at length, seated at his ease before his desk, after raising the seal with pious care, he was obliged to press his hand to his heart, which seemed ready to burst his ribs.

"My dear Sir," said the letter, "I am disappearing for ever, as my part is played out. I must thank you for having made it not only easy, but agreeable. By entangling you in a quarrel with the Thuilliers and the Collevilles, who are now very fully informed as to the true feelings you entertain towards them, and by taking care to comment on the sufficiently aggravating circumstances of your sudden and ruthless breach, in the way most likely to nettle their middle-class pride, I am proud and happy to have done you signal service. The girl does not love you, and you love only the bright looks of her fortune. So I have saved you both from a hell on earth. In exchange for the young lady you have so impudently thrown over, a charming wife is in reserve for you. She is richer and handsomer than Mademoiselle Colleville, and, to allude to myself, she is freer than your unworthy servant,

the married woman, TORNA, COMTESSE DE GODOLLO.

"P.S. For further information refer without delay to M. du Portail, gentleman, Rue Honoré-Chevalier, near Rue Cassette, Quartier Saint-Sulpice. He expects you."

Having read to the end, the advocate of the poor clasped his head in both hands; he saw nothing, heard nothing, thought nothing; he was crushed.

Some days elapsed before la Peyrade could rally from the

sledge-hammer blow that had felled him. The shock was indeed a terrible one. On coming out of the golden dream that had shown him the future under so fair a guise, he saw himself the victim of a hoax which was all the more cruel to his conceit, and his pretensions to craft and skill, because it left him irrevocably embroiled with the Thuilliers and loaded with a debt of twenty-five thousand francs. This, to be sure, was not immediately due, but he was also pledged to pay Brigitte a sum of ten thousand francs, and this his care for his dignity required him to do as soon as possible; finally, the thing that put the finishing touch to his humiliation and disappointment was that, on searching his heart, he felt that he was not radically cured of his passionate admiration for the woman who had wrought this great disaster and led him to ruin.

Either this Delilah was a very great lady, of such high position that she might indulge her most compromising whims, and had given herself the amusement of playing the coquette in a sort of dialogue, he playing the simpleton; or she was an adventuress of great accomplishment, in the pay of this Monsieur du Portail, and the agent for his matrimonial schemes. So the two alternative verdicts he could pronounce on this dangerous lady were, that she was a bad woman, or that she had a bad heart; and in either case it did not seem that she had any great claim to be regretted by her victim.

But we must put ourselves in the place of this son of the south, with his hot blood and fiery spirit, who, for the first time in his life, had found himself in presence of a passion in scent and laces, and believed he might drink it out of a golden cup. As on waking, we retain the impression of a dream that agitated us, so la Peyrade, still bewitched with what had never been but a shadow, needed all his moral strength to evict the image of the perfidious Countess. To be accurate, he did not cease to yearn for her; only he took care to clothe in a decent pretext his intense desire to find her, which he called curiosity, thirst for revenge, working out this ingenious argument:—

"Cérizet spoke to me of a rich heiress; the Countess in her letter tells me that the elaborate intrigue in which she had entangled me will lead to a wealthy marriage. Now, rich marriages, to be flung at a man's feet, do not grow so thick that two such chances should fall in my way within a few weeks. Consequently, the match proposed to me by Cérizet, and this that has again been offered me are the same—this crazy girl to whom they are so strangely bent on marrying me! Consequently, Cérizet, being in the plot, must know the Countess; consequently through him I must get on the track of the Hungarian. At any rate I shall get some information as to the strange selection of which I am the object. People who can bring such well-dressed puppets on the stage to gain their ends must be of some importance in the world. I will go to see Cérizet."

And he went to see Cérizet.

The two old allies had not met since the dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale.* Once or twice at Thuillier's, whither Dutocq came but rarely now that they lived so far apart, la Peyrade had asked the clerk of assize what had become of his copying-clerk.

"He never mentions you," replied Dutocq. Whence the lawyer had concluded that resentment, the *manet alta mente repostum,* was still hot in the vindictive money-lender.

This did not stop la Peyrade. After all, he was not going to ask him a favor; he was going under pretence of reopening an affair in which Cérizet had interfered; and Cérizet never interfered in anything that was not likely to prove profitable to himself. Hence the chances were in favor of an eager and affectionate reception rather than a repulse. Also, the lawyer decided on calling on Cérizet in his master's office; it was a less personal visit than going to see him in his den in the Rue des Poules, not an inviting spot.

It was about two o'clock when la Peyrade went into the offices of the police court of the twelfth arrondissement. He went through the outer room where the appellants were waiting, who perpetually besiege the magistrates of the lower

courts for matters connected with the affixing and removing of seals after a death, with affidavits and declarations, with disputes between employers and servants, landlords and tenants, purchasers and dealers, or cases brought in by the police. Without stopping, la Peyrade went on to the room between the waiting-room and the office of the clerk of assize. There sat Cérizet, writing at a shabby desk of black stained wood, opposite a chair for an inferior clerk, at this moment vacant.

As Cérizet saw the advocate come in, he gave him a sinister look, and, without moving from his place, or ceasing to copy a decision that lay before him, he said:

"What! You, Maître la Peyrade. Well, you have got your friend Thuillier into a pretty mess!"

"How are you?" said la Peyrade, with determined familiarity.

"I?" replied Cérizet. "As you see, always chained to the oar; and to continue the nautical metaphor, I may ask you what wind has blown you here. Is it by chance the blast of adversity?"

La Peyrade, without answering, brought a chair up to the table, and said very gravely:

"My dear boy, we must have a few words together."

"It would seem," said Cérizet with malignant insistency, "that there is a coolness between you and the Thuilliers since the seizure of the pamphlet."

"The Thuilliers are ungrateful wretches," answered la Peyrade. "I have cut their acquaintance."

"Whether you have cut them or they have cut you," said Cérizet, "they have shut their door on you; and from what Dutocq tells me, Brigitte speaks of you with anything rather than respect. This, my friend, is what comes of trying to manage your affairs single-handed; when difficulties arise there is no one to round the corners off. If you had but got me the lease, I should have been acquainted with the Thuilliers, Dutocq would not have thrown you over, and we could have steered you safely into port."

"And supposing I don't want to be steered into port," retorted la Peyrade rather angrily. "I tell you I have had more than enough of the Thuilliers; I was the first to break off with them; I told them to get out of my light; and if Dutocq told you anything different you may tell him he is a liar; is that plain enough? It seems to me I am explicit."

"Just so, my dear fellow, and if you are so much annoyed at all this Thuillerie, you should have turned me loose among them; you would have seen how I would have avenged you and worried them."

"There you are right enough," said la Peyrade, "and I should be glad to have set you at their heels; but, once for all, I could do nothing in the matter of the lease."

"I suppose," said Cérizet, "that your conscience made you feel it a duty to explain to Brigitte that the sum of twelve thousand francs, which I hoped to make, might as well remain in her pocket."

"It seems that Dutocq still carries on the worthy business of spy which he used to exercise in the Exchequer offices; and like all men of that foul calling, he draws up reports that are no more ingenious than they are true."

"Take care!" said Cérizet. "You are speaking of my master and in his own den."

"Come now," said la Peyrade, "I came to discuss serious business. Will you be so good as to let me hear no more of the Thuilliers or their concerns, and to give me all your attention?"

"Speak on, my dear boy," said Cérizet, laying down his pen, which, till now, had not ceased to run over the sheet of stamped paper. "I am listening."

"Not long ago," la Peyrade went on, "you spoke to me of a girl to be married, rich, of full age, and suffering a little from hysteria—as you euphemistically expressed it."

"Aha!" cried the money-lender, "I have been waiting for this. You have had great difficulty in catching me up!"

"When you proposed this heiress to me," asked la Peyrade, "what had you in your head?"

"Why, a splendid stroke of business for you, to be sure; you had only to stoop and pick her up. I was formally instructed to make the offer, and there was no brokerage; I should have relied entirely on your generosity."

"But you were not the only person instructed to sound me; there was a woman employed on the same errand."

"A woman!" said Cérizet quite naturally. "Not to my knowledge."

"Yes. A foreigner, fairly young and pretty, whom you must surely have met at the house of the young lady's family, for she seemed very ardently devoted to them."

"There has never been any woman implicated in this negotiation. I have every reason to believe that it was left entirely to me."

"Do you mean to say," said la Peyrade, fixing a scrutinizing eye on the copying-clerk, "that you have never heard of the Comtesse Torna de Godollo?"

"Never in all the days of my life. I never heard the name till this moment."

"Then there must be another party in the field; for this lady, after many singular preliminaries too long to relate, formally proposed to me a match with a young person of greater wealth than Mademoiselle Colleville."

"Of full age and hysterical?" asked Cérizet.

"No, the offer was not enhanced by those accessory details; but there was another point which may perhaps afford a clue. Madame de Godollo desired me, if I cared to follow the matter up, to call on one Monsieur du Portail, gentleman."

"Rue Honoré-Chevalier?" asked Cérizet eagerly.

"Just so."

"Well, then, it is certainly the same match offered through two intermediaries. But it is strange that I should not have been told of this combination of forces."

"So that, in fact," said la Peyrade, "you not only had no suspicion of the Countess' intervention, but you do not know her, and can give me no information about her?"

"At this moment certainly not," said the money-lender.

"But I shall make inquiries, for such a proceeding, as regards myself, strikes me as a little cool. As regards you, this employment of two agents proves how suitable the family think you."

At this moment the door of the office was cautiously opened a little way; a woman's head appeared, and a voice, at once recognized by la Peyrade, said:

"Oh! I beg pardon! You are engaged, sir. Might I speak two words to you, sir, when you are alone?"

Cérizet, whose eye was as quick as his pen, noticed this. La Peyrade, sitting where the newcomer could see him, no sooner heard the honeyed drawl, than he hastened to turn his head so as to hide his features. Consequently, instead of dismissing the woman roughly, as was the usual treatment accorded to intruders by this least affable and kindly of copying-clerks, the modest visitor heard the words:

"Come in, come in, Madame Lambert; you would have to wait a long time."

"Oh! monsieur! The advocate of the poor!" cried his creditor, whom the reader has no doubt recognized. "How glad I am to meet you, sir. I had been several times to your place to ask whether you had had time to attend to my little affair."

"To be sure. I have had lately many occupations that have taken me out," said la Peyrade. "But everything is done, and the papers sent in to the secretary."

"How good you are, sir!" said the pious dame, clasping her hands.

"What, you and Madame Lambert have business together!" said Cérizet; "you did not tell me that. Are you old Picot's adviser?"

"No, indeed, unfortunately," said the woman. "My master will take advice of no one; he is so wilful, so pigheaded. But, my dear sir, is it true that another family council is to be held?"

"Not a doubt of it," said Cérizet, "and no later than to-morrow."

"But how is that, monsieur, when the judges in court have decided that the family has no rights?"

"Very true, yes," replied the clerk, "the lower court and the Court of Appeal rejected the application on the part of the relations for a commission in lunacy."

"I should think so, indeed," said Madame Lambert. "Fancy trying to make out that such a capable man is mad."

"But the relations will not give in. They are taking the matter up from another side, and insist on the appointment of trustees of the estate. It is for that they are to meet to-morrow, and this time I think, my dear Madame Lambert, that old father Picot will be placed in leading-strings. There are some very serious allegations; to pluck the bird a little is one thing, but not till it is quite bare."

"What! Can you believe?" said the woman, raising her clasped hands to her chin, and lifting her shoulders.

"I! I believe nothing," said Cérizet, "I am not the judge in the case. But the relations say that you have made away with considerable sums of money, and made investments which they mean to inquire into."

"Dear Heaven!" said the pious soul, "they may search. I have not a bond, not a share, not a note, not the smallest security in my possession."

"Oho!" said Cérizet, with a side glance at la Peyrade. "You have obliging friends who take charge—well, well, it is no concern of mine; people must go their own way. And what in particular do you want to say to me?"

"I wanted," replied the bigot, "to entreat you, monsieur, to ask Monsieur Dutocq to intercede for us with Monsieur the Justice of the Peace; the vicar of Saint-Jacques will speak for us, too. Poor old man!" she added, with tears, "if they worry him so, they will be the death of him."

"The Justice of the Peace is against you, I cannot conceal the fact," replied Cérizet. "The other day, as you know, he refused to see you. As to the clerk of assize and myself, there is little that we can do. And besides, my good lady, you are really too close with us."

"You ask me, monsieur, if I had invested any little savings. I cannot say I have, when, on the contrary, all my own little money has been spent in housekeeping for poor Monsieur Pi-i-cot, whom I am accu-u-used of robbing."

Madame Lambert had come to sobs.

"It is my opinion, and I tell you so plainly," said Cérizet, "that you make yourself out much poorer than you are, and if my friend la Peyrade, who seems to be honored with your confidence, were not tongue-tied by the obligations of his profession——"

"I," interrupted la Peyrade quickly, "I know nothing of this lady's affairs. She came to me to draw up a memorial for her in a matter that has no connection with either law or finance."

"Ah, yes; that was it," remarked Cérizet. "Madame Lambert had been to you about that memorial on the day when Dutocq met her—the day after the famous dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale,* where you played the lord."

And then, as if he attached no importance to this recollection, he added:

"Well, my good Madame Lambert, I will ask the Master to speak to the Justice, and if I have a chance I will do so myself; but I warn you, he is not on your side."

Madame Lambert withdrew with many courtesies and many protestations of gratitude.

When she was gone la Peyrade spoke.

"You do not seem to believe," said he, "that this woman came to me to get a memorial drawn up. It is, nevertheless, absolutely true; she is regarded as a saint in the street where she lives, and from all I could find out about her, the old man, whom she is accused of fleecing, lives on her sacrifices. Consequently, somebody put it into the good lady's head to try for one of the Monthyon prizes, and it was her various claims to such a reward that she asked me to prove and set forth."

"To be sure, the Monthyon prizes!" exclaimed Cérizet. "That is a hint, my dear fellow, and we are foolish not to try

for them ourselves. I, especially, being the banker of the poor, as you are their advocate. As to your client, she may think herself lucky that old Picot's relatives are not members of the Academy, for the prize for virtue they would award her is given in the criminal court.—But to return to our own business; as I was saying, I advise you to have done with shilly-shally, and like your Countess, I say you cannot do better than go to call on du Portail."

"What sort of man is he?" asked la Peyrade.

"A little old man as delicate as amber," answered Cérizet, "and who seems to me to have quite unlimited credit. Go. Seeing, as they say, costs nothing."

"Yes," said la Peyrade, "I may possibly go. But first you must find out who and what is this Comtesse de Godollo."

"What is the Countess to you?" said Cérizet; "she is only a supernumerary in the play."

"I have my notions," said the lawyer. "Within two or three days you will surely know where you stand with regard to her, and then I will call on you again."

"My good fellow," said the money-lender, "you seem to me to be dawdling over trifles at the very door. Are you in love, by chance, with this fair matrimonial agent?"

"A plague on the man!" thought the lawyer. "He guesses everything, and it is impossible to keep one's own secrets. No," said he aloud, "I am not in love; on the contrary, I am cautious. I confess that I nibble but feebly at this marriage with a mad woman, and before embarking on the enterprise, I should like to see where I am setting foot. This roundabout method of proceeding is barely satisfactory, and since such various influences are brought to bear, I will try to check one by the other. So do not try any of your tricks, nor give me the sort of information concerning the Comtesse Torna de Godollo that you can spin out of your own brain, like the description in a passport; a round chin and oval face—a saddle to fit any horse. I warn you that I am quite able to verify the accuracy of your report, and if I find you trying to play any games on me, I have nothing to say to your du Portail."

"Play any games on you, monseigneur; who would dare try it?" replied Cérizet, putting on the tone and accent of Frédérick Lemaître.

As he made this ironical speech, Dutocq came in, followed by his under-clerk. He had been employed on business in town.

"Hallo!" cried he, on finding la Peyrade with Cérizet, "behold the Trinity re-instituted. But the object of the alliance, the *casus fœderis,* is gone down stream, it seems. What have you been doing to our worthy Brigitte, my dear la Peyrade? She is mortally offended with you."

"And Thuillier?" asked the advocate.

It was the scene in Molière the other way about; Tartuffe asking for news of Orgon.

"Thuillier at first was not so hostile; but the matter of the pamphlet, it would seem, is not looking badly. As he wants you less, he is beginning to swim in his sister's wake; and as things go on I hardly doubt that within a few days, if the King's Counsel decide that there is no case against him, you will be a man to be hanged, in his opinion."

"Well, I am out of that mess," said la Peyrade, "and if I am ever caught in such another! Good-bye, my dear boys," he added. "And you, Cèrizet, in the matter I spoke to you about, promptitude, accuracy, and secrecy."

When la Peyrade got out into the courtyard of the Mairie, he was accosted by Madame Lambert, who had waited for him.

"I hope, monsieur," she said unctuously, "that you do not believe all the shocking things Monsieur Cérizet said in your presence. You know, for a fact, that I came by my money through inheritance from my uncle in England?"

"Well and good!" said la Peyrade. "But you must understand that, with all the reports put about by your master's relations, there is little enough chance for you of the prize for virtue."

"If it is not God's will that I should obtain it——"

"And you must see, too, how important it is, for your own sake, that you should keep the secret of the service I

have done you. At the very first breath of indiscretion, as I told you, the money will be returned to you without mercy."

"Oh, sir, you may be quite easy."

"Well, then, good-bye, my dear," said la Peyrade, in a patronizing tone.

As he went away he heard a voice calling from a window on the stairs:

"Madame Lambert!"

It was Cérizet, who suspected this meeting, and came to make sure.

"Madame Lambert," he repeated, "Monsieur Dutocq is come in, and if you want to speak to him——"

La Peyrade had no means of hindering the interview, though he felt that the secret of his borrowing from the woman would be in the greatest danger.

"Decidedly," thought he, as he went on his way, "I am out of luck. I do not see the end of it."

There was so strong an instinct of dominion in Brigitte that it was without regret, nay, it must be said, with secret joy, that she saw Madame de Godollo disappear. That woman, she was well aware, was her superior to a crushing degree; and this, though it added to the good effect of her house, at the same time put her ill at ease; so, when the parting took place, on perfectly good terms and under a plausible and decent pretext, *Miss* Thuillier breathed more freely. She was like a sovereign who has been long overborne by a domineering but indispensable minister, and who illuminates his heart on the day when death comes to deliver him from the tyrant whose services and rival influence he has so impatiently endured.

Thuillier was not far from feeling the same with regard to la Peyrade. But Madame de Godollo had only added elegance, whereas the advocate had been useful in the house they had almost simultaneously abandoned; and by the end of a few days, the presence of the Provençal was a want keenly felt, as prospectuses say, in his "dear fellow's" political and literary plans.

The town councillor found himself suddenly called upon to draw up an important report. He could not shirk the task which had fallen to him as a result of the reputation his pamphlet had earned him as a clever writer and a man of letters; and confronted with the perilous honor conferred on him by his colleagues of the Municipal Board, he felt overwhelmed by his isolation and incapacity.

In vain did he shut himself up in his study, gorge himself with black coffee, mend his pens, and write twenty times over, on paper which he carefully cut to the exact size of that used by la Peyrade, *"A Report to the Worshipful Members of the Municipal Council of the City of Paris;"* adding on a separate line a grandly engrossed *"Gentlemen,"* and then rush frantically out to complain that a fearful racket checked the flow of his ideas, when some one in the house had merely shut a door, opened a cupboard, or moved a chair. All this did not advance matters, nor even begin the composition.

Fortunately, Rabourdin wanted to make some little alteration in the arrangement of the rooms he occupied, and he came, as a matter of course, to submit the plan to the landlord. Thuillier eagerly consented, and he then spoke to his tenant of the report he was to draw up, being anxious, as he said, to have his opinion on the subject of it.

Rabourdin, to whom no detail of official work was unfamiliar, at once shed a vast amount of clear and helpful light on the question submitted to him. He was one of those men to whom the intellectual character of their hearers is a matter of indifference; a fool or a clever man serves equally well to spur them to think aloud, and is an equally efficient exciting cause.

When he had done, Rabourdin saw perfectly that Thuillier had not understood him; but he had listened to himself with much pleasure; he was grateful, too, for his hearer's attention, obtuse as it was, and for his landlord's readiness to grant his request.

"Indeed," he added, as he went away, "I must have some

notes on the subject among my papers; I will look them up and send them to you."

And that evening he sent a voluminous manuscript to Thuillier, who spent the night in drawing on this valuable well-spring of ideas. He finally extracted more than he needed to compose a really remarkable paper, in spite of a somewhat inept use of his plunder.

The report, which was read two days after to the Council, had an immense success, and Thuillier came home beaming from the compliments he had received. From that hour—for even in his old age he would still talk of "the report I had the honor of laying before the Municipal Council of the Seine"—la Peyrade sank considerably in his estimation; he thought he could henceforth well dispense with the Provençal's services, and thus proudly emancipated, he encouraged himself with the prospect of another piece of fortune which came upon him at about the same time.

A parliamentary crisis was impending; this suggested to the Ministry that, with a view to depriving the opposition of a ground of hostility, which always strongly influences public opinion, they would do well to relax the rigorous measures which had of late been too strenuously dealt to the press. Thuillier was included in this hypocritical amnesty, and received a letter one morning from the advocate he had engaged instead of la Peyrade. This letter informed him that the Council had dismissed the case, and that the seizure of the documents was nullified.

Then Dutocq's prophecy came true. With this load removed, Thuillier swaggered over the dismissal of the case, and, joining in chorus with Brigitte, he spoke of la Peyrade as a sort of sneak whom he had nourished, who had swindled him of considerable sums, and behaved with the grossest ingratitude, and whom he rejoiced no longer to count among his acquaintance. Orgon, in short, had rebelled, and like Dorine, would have been ready to cry:

> "A pauper who came without shoes to his feet,
> Whose clothes not a beggar would wear in the street."

Cérizet, to whom Dutocq duly reported these indignities, would not have failed to repeat them all hot to la Peyrade; but the interview with the copying-clerk, when he was to supply the required information, never took place. La Peyrade found out the truth for himself.

This was what happened.

Haunted persistently by the thought of the fair Hungarian, while waiting—or rather without waiting—for the result of Cérizet's investigations, he tramped all over Paris, and was to be seen like the idlest of loafers in all the most crowded resorts, his heart persuading him that at any moment he might meet the object of his burning search.

One evening in the middle of October,—the autumn was splendid, as it often is in Paris,—on the boulevards where the lawyer aired his passion and his melancholy, the bustle of out-of-door life was as lively as in the middle of the summer.

On the Boulevard des Italiens, formerly called the Boulevard de Gand, as he wandered past the row of chairs in front of the Café de Paris, where an espalier of fly-by-night beauties await the gloved hand that shall pluck them, mixing meanwhile with married wives from the Chaussée d'Antin, accompanied by their husbands and children, la Peyrade was suddenly pierced to the heart; he saw from afar his adored Countess.

She was alone, and in a splendor of dress which seemed scarcely appropriate to the place and to her loneliness; in a chair in front of her was a little white dog, which she was caressing with her elegant hands.

After convincing himself that he was not mistaken, the lawyer was rushing to greet the heavenly vision, when he was outstripped by a *lion* of the most conquering type; without throwing away his cigar, or even lifting his hat, this fine young gentleman began to talk with the Ideal Being. As she caught sight of the Provençal, very pale and about to address her, the siren no doubt took fright, for she rose, and hastily taking the young man's arm:

"Is your carriage here, Émile?" said she, "it is the last night at Mabille, and I want to go."

The name of that disreputable resort, thus flung at the unhappy lawyer, was in fact a boon, for it saved him from a signal act of folly; that of speaking to a woman arm in arm with a man so suddenly constituted her protector—a worthless creature of whom he had been thinking with a world of tenderness, only a few minutes since.

"She is not worth insulting," said he to himself.

But, as lovers are not easily driven to raise a siege when they have begun it, the Provençal would not yet believe that he knew all.

Not far from the seat just left by the Hungarian lady, sat another woman, also alone, but she was elderly, with a feathered bonnet; and under an Indian shawl, a worn standard with colors faded by time, were some pitiable relics of tarnished elegance, and shabby, unfashionable magnificence. Her whole appearance, in short, was not imposing or respect-inspiring—on the contrary. So la Peyrade sat down next this matron, and addressing her without ceremony, asked her:

"Do you, madame, happen to know the woman who has just gone off on a gentleman's arm?"

"Certainly I do, monsieur. I know nearly all those ladies who come here."

"And her name is?"

"Madame Komorn."

"Is she as impregnable as the fortress whose name she bears?" asked the lawyer.

It may be remembered that at the time of the revolution in Hungary, our ears were constantly pestered by novel-writers and the newspaper press, with the famous citadel of Komorn, and la Peyrade knew that an inquiry started with apparent indifference and levity is always more likely to be successful.

"Did you think of making her acquaintance, monsieur?"

"I do not know," said la Peyrade. "But she is a woman to be remembered."

"And a very dangerous woman, monsieur," replied the matron; "a leech for money, and without any propensity for a generous acknowledgment of anything done for her. I speak of what I know; when she came here from Berlin, six months ago, she was very highly introduced to me."

"Indeed!" said la Peyrade eagerly.

"Yes, I had a very fine place at that time, near Ville d'Avray,—a park, preserves, a fishing-stream,—and as I was dull there, all by myself, and had not money enough to lead a genteel country life, several gentlemen and ladies said to me: 'Madame Louchard, you ought to get up parties, picnics——'"

"Madame Louchard?" exclaimed la Peyrade. "Are you related to Monsieur Louchard, of the commercial police?"

"I am his wife, sir, but legally separated. A dreadful man, who only wanted me to make it up again. But, no! I can forgive anything but want of consideration; when I tell you that one day he dared to raise his hand to strike me——"

"And so you arranged the picnics," said la Peyrade, to bring the lady back to the point, "and Madame de Godollo—Madame Komorn, I should say——?"

"She was one of the first to dwell under my roof. There she made the acquaintance of an Italian, a very genteel young man, a political refugee, but quite high class. As you may suppose, I did not choose that any intrigues should be carried on in my house; but the poor man was so much in love, and so unhappy because Madame Komorn would have nothing to say to him, that I really took an interest in his love-affair—which was a very good stroke of business for that madam, for she got large sums out of the Italian gentleman. Well, and would you believe that, when I happened to stand in need of a small sum, and asked her to oblige me, she refused point-blank, and left the house, taking her young man with her; and he has had no reason to rejoice over the connection."

"Why, what happened to him?" asked la Peyrade.

"What happened was that that viper knows every lan-

guage of Europe; that she is clever down to the ends of her finger-nails, and even more intriguing; and being, it would seem, in some way employed by the police, she handed over to the Government some papers her Italian had left about, so that he was packed out of this country."

"And since the Italian left, Madame Komorn——?"

"Since then she has had many adventures and damaged some fine fortunes; I thought she had vanished. For more than two months she remained perfectly invisible, till the other day she reappeared, more splendid than ever. For my part, I cannot advise you, monsieur, to run after her. At the same time, you look like a southerner; you have your passions, no doubt, and perhaps all I have told you has only fired your fancy. And, after all, being warned, there is no great danger; you honor your saint as you find her. And it cannot be denied that she is a fascinating woman, oh, most fascinating. She was really very fond of me, though we did not part friends; and only just now she asked me my address that she might come to see me."

"Well, madame, I will think it over," said la Peyrade, rising and bowing.

The bow was returned with stern coldness; his abrupt departure showed that he did not really mean business.

On finding the lawyer making his investigation almost gayly, the reader might suppose that he was suddenly cured; but this superficial coolness and impartiality were but the unwonted calm which precedes a tempest.

On leaving Madame Louchard, la Peyrade jumped into a hackney cab, and then a deluge of tears, like that which Madame Colleville had witnessed on the occasion of the bidding for the house, when he believed Cérizet to have cheated him, was the first explosion of his grief.

The siege he had so elaborately and patiently laid to the Thuilliers, at the cost of so many sacrifices, now absolutely useless; Flavie so completely avenged for the atrocious farce he had played with her; his affairs in a worse plight now than when Cérizet and Dutocq had shut him up, like a wolf

in the fold, from which he was now driven out like a mere silly sheep; then the schemes prompted by hatred to ruin the woman who had so easily got the better of him in spite of all his skill, and the still lively remembrance of the charms to which he had succumbed,—these were the thoughts and emotions of a night spent in waking, or in sleep disturbed by painful dreams.

By morning la Peyrade had ceased to think; he was in a violent fever, and the complications were sufficiently serious for the physician, who was called in, to take precautions against the development of brain fever, of which the symtoms supervened. Leeches, bleeding, ice on his head—these were the delightful sequel to the Provençal's dream of love; but then it must be said that the crisis to his constitution physically led to a complete cure of the moral malady. The advocate no longer felt anything but the coldest contempt for the treacherous Hungarian, not even rising to the notion of revenge.

Restored to health, and seriously considering his future prospects, having lost so much ground, la Peyrade asked himself whether it would not be wise to patch up his quarrel with the Thuilliers, or whether he had better continue his road in the company of the crazy heiress who had gold where others have a brain. But everything that could remind him of his disastrous experience filled him with invincible disgust; besides, what security had he in dealing with this du Portail, who could bring into the range of the means he employed instruments of such base quality?

Great agitations of soul are like storms that purify the atmosphere; they give tone and bring counsel of strong and generous resolve.

La Peyrade, after the mortification he had suffered, was led to introspection. He looked back on the life of base and ignoble intrigue he had been leading for a year past. Was there no better, no nobler use to be made of the high faculties of which he was conscious? The bar was open to

him as to all; and this was a broad and direct road which might lead him to the satisfaction of every legitimate ambition. Like Figaro, who, merely to live, had expended more science and learning than had been brought to bear in a century on the government of the Spanish Empire, he, to establish and maintain his footing in the Thuilliers' house and to marry the daughter of a musician and a flirt, had laid out more wit, more art, and—it must be said, since in so corrupt a society it is a factor to be counted with—more dishonesty than would have been needed to get on in an honorable career.

"Enough," thought he to himself, "of such acquaintances as Dutocq and Cérizet; enough of the nauseous atmosphere that is breathed in the world of the Minards, the Phellions, the Collevilles, the Barniols, the Laudigeois! Let me live in Paris, and shake off this provincial life in town, which is a thousand times more absurd and more petty than provincial life in the country. That, with all its narrowness, had at least its individuality and a dignity *sui generis;* it is honestly what is it, the antipodes of Paris life; this is but its parody."

La Peyrade, in consequence, went to call on two or three attorneys who had offered to introduce him to the courts by giving him some second-class cases; he accepted those that were at once offered him, and three weeks after his quarrel with the Thuilliers he had ceased to be the advocate of the poor and had become a recognized pleader.

La Peyrade had already defended some cases with success, when a letter reached him one morning which disturbed him greatly. The president of the Association of Advocates begged him to call on him in his chambers in the Palais in the course of the day; something of importance was to be communicated to him.

The house near the Madeleine at once occurred to him. This transaction, if it had come to the knowledge of the Board of Control, would render him immediately answerable to that body, and he knew how strict the rules were.

Now, du Portail, on whom he had not yet called, in spite of

the half promise made to Cérizet, might have heard the whole story from Cérizet himself. To that man, if he might judge from his employing the Hungarian, all ways and means were acceptable. In his determination to arrange the crazy girl's marriage, it was quite possible that the maniac, du Portail, might have reported him to the board. Might not his persecutor, on seeing him starting with courage and some prospects of success in a career that promised independence and fortune, have made up his mind to render his advancement impossible? This certainly was probable enough to make the lawyer look forward with anxiety to the moment when he should be able to verify the exact nature of this alarming invitation.

While the Provençal gave himself up to conjecture over a frugal breakfast, Madame Coffinet, whose privilege it was to do his rooms, came to ask him if he would receive Monsieur Étienne Lousteau.

Étienne Lousteau! La Peyrade fancied he had somewhere seen the name.

"Show him into my private room," said he.

And a moment later he went to greet the visitor, whose face, too, was not altogether unknown to him.

"Monsieur," said he to la Peyrade, "I had the honor of breakfasting in your company not long ago at Véfour's. I was invited to that entertainment, which did not go quite smoothly, by your friend Monsieur Thuillier."

"Ah, to be sure," said the lawyer, giving him a chair, "you are employed on some newspaper."

"Editor of *Écho de la Bièvre;* and it is with regard to that paper that I wish to speak with you. You know what is going on?"

"No," said la Peyrade.

"What? not that the Ministry met with a severe rebuff yesterday, and that instead of retiring as everybody expected, they have dissolved Parliament and intend to appeal to the country."

"I knew nothing of it," said la Peyrade; "I have not read the morning's papers."

"So the campaign of parliamentary ambitions has begun, and, if I am well informed, Monsieur Thuillier, a member already of the Municipal Council, will be getting himself nominated as candidate for the twelfth arrondissement."

"That, no doubt, will be his next step."

"Well, then, monsieur, I should wish to place at his disposal an organ of which I fancy you will appreciate the value. The *Écho de la Bièvre*, as a local paper, may have an important influence on the election in that district."

"And you are prepared to use that influence to support Thuillier's election?" asked la Peyrade.

"More than that," replied Étienne Lousteau. "I wish to propose to Monsieur Thuillier that he should become the owner of the paper; as the owner he can command it as a master."

"But in the first place," said the lawyer, "what position does the paper hold? As a local paper, as you say, I have scarcely come across it; indeed, it would be altogether unknown to me but for the remarkable article you were good enough to publish in Thuillier's defence, when his pamphlet was seized."

Lousteau bowed in acknowledgment; then he went on:

"The position is sound, and we could sell on very reasonable terms, for we were on the point of giving it up."

"That is strange, with a prosperous paper."

"Not at all, nothing can be more natural," said Lousteau. "The founders, all representative men of the great leather industries, had started the paper for a special end. That end is achieved; the *Écho de la Bièvre* remained an effect without a cause. Under these circumstances, for shareholders who do not care for unnecessary trouble or fag ends of business, and who do not fancy small investments, the simplest thing is to sell the concern."

"Well," said la Peyrade, "but does the paper pay its way?"

"That," said Lousteau, "is a matter we have never troubled ourselves about. We never looked for subscribers. The machinery was simply put in motion to exert a direct effect

on the Ministry of Commerce to secure an increased duty on imported leather. This, as you may suppose, was not a matter to fire the enthusiasm of the public outside the trade."

"But I certainly supposed," said la Peyrade doggedly, "that a newspaper, however limited its aim, was a lever of which the force must depend on the number of subscribers?"

"Not in the case of a paper started for a definite purpose," replied Lousteau pompously. "In that case, on the contrary, subscribers are a trouble; they want to be catered for and amused, and meanwhile the aim in view is neglected. A paper working within restricted limits ought to be a lens, which, being constantly focused to a certain spot, makes the gun go off at the right moment."

"Very well," said la Peyrade, "and what value do you suppose such a publication to stand at, when it has few or no subscribers, and does not pay its way, especially when it has hitherto been devoted to a quite different purpose from that to which it must henceforward be directed?"

"Before answering you," said Lousteau, "I must ask you a question: Are you thinking of buying?"

"That must depend on circumstances," said the lawyer. "Of course I must see Thuillier; but I may say at once that he has no sort of experience in the business of a newspaper; that, to his narrow and commonplace ideas, a newspaper is an almost ruinous form of property. Consequently, if, when presenting to his mind an entirely novel idea which cannot fail to scare him, you at the same time name a formidable figure, it is quite useless to broach the matter. I can tell you at once that it will come to nothing."

"No," answered Lousteau, "as I have told you, we will be reasonable, and the gentlemen have given me a free hand. At the same time I may tell you that we have several offers, and that in giving Monsieur Thuillier the refusal we believe ourselves to be doing him a special service. When may I hope for a reply?"

"By to-morrow, I think. Shall I do myself the honor of calling on you, or at the office of the paper?"

"No," said Lousteau, rising, "I will be here at the same hour to-morrow, if that suits you."

"Perfectly," said la Peyrade, seeing out his visitor, who struck him as self-sufficient rather than capable.

The reader will have understood, from la Peyrade's way of meeting the suggestion that he was to play the go-between to Thuillier, that a sudden change had come over his notions of things. Even if he had not received that disturbing note from the President of the Association, the new position in which Thuillier now found himself by the opportunity afforded to his parliamentary ambition, would have given him much to think about. His "dear fellow" would evidently be brought back to him, and his mania for sitting in the Chamber would hand Thuillier over to him, bound hand and foot. Was not this an opportunity, while hedging himself behind all the cautions suggested by past experience, for re-opening the question of his marriage to Céleste? This possible conclusion, far from invalidating the good resolutions formed at the time of his luckless love-affair and his fever, would, on the contrary, secure their fulfilment and success. Still, if, as might be feared, he should receive from the Board of Control of his Society one of those reprimands which crush a career at the outset, it would seem natural enough that he should look for the remedy to the originator of the mischief; it was his instinct and his right to apply to the Thuilliers for protection, as the accomplices of his ill deed and the first cause of his overthrow.

And thinking over all these things, la Peyrade made his way to wait on the President at the Palais de Justice.

He had guessed rightly; in a clear and circumstantial statement, a report of all he had done in the matter of the house had been laid before the council of his fellow-advocates; and the dignitary of the Association, while admitting that an anonymous indictment must always be regarded with extreme suspicion, explained to the accused that he was prepared to accept his explanations.

La Peyrade dared not risk a formal denial of the charges. The hand that had dealt the blow was, he felt sure, too de-

termined and too skilful to be unsupported by proofs. But, while acknowledging the fundamental accuracy of the statement, he tried to give the facts a presentable aspect.

He understood, however, that he had not won the day when the President of the Board made reply:

"Immediately after the next vacation I will lay the matter before the council—both the information against you, and your plea on your own behalf. Only the council can pronounce judgment in so important a case."

Thus dismissed, la Peyrade saw that his prospects as a pleader were in danger. However, there was a respite, and in case of the worst, he might find where to lay his head. He put on his gown, which he still had the right to wear, and went into court, where he had a case to argue.

On coming out of court, loaded with one of those bundles of briefs which are carried tied up with a webbing strap, and being too big to tuck under one arm, are necessarily balanced on the forearm and hand, propped against the body, the Provençal began to walk along the gallery known as the *Salle des pas perdus,* with the hurried gait of a man who is so busy that he only wishes he could be in two places at once.

Whether he had really got heated over his defence, or merely affected to be in a violent perspiration so as to prove that his gown was not for show only, but his panoply in the fight, he was mopping his brow with his handkerchief as he went, when from afar he caught sight of his Thuillier, who had just seen him in the vast hall and was bearing down upon him.

The meeting did not surprise him. On leaving home he had told Madame Coffinet that he was going into court and should remain there till three o'clock, so that she should send everybody on who wanted to see him.

Not wishing to make matters too easy for Thuillier, la Peyrade turned round, as if he had suddenly remembered something, and sat down on one of the benches that are placed all round that great ante-room to justice. He then unstrapped his bundle, took out some papers, and buried him-

self behind them with the air of a man who has not had time to study in his private room the case which his readiness of thought and speech will enable him to plead at sight. Or this airy reference to his papers in this public spot might be regarded as the act of a cautious and conscientious pleader, refreshing his memory and giving a last glance at his forces before engaging the foe.

All this time, of course, the Provençal was watching Thuillier's manœuvres out of the corner of his eye; and he, supposing la Peyrade to be engrossed in serious business, was doubting how to address him.

After a few turns up and down, the Town Councillor at last made up his mind, and making straight sail for the point towards which he had for the last quarter of an hour been mentally steering:

"Why, Théodose!" he exclaimed. "Then you are often in court now?"

"Well, it seems to me," said la Peyrade, "that a pleader in the law-courts is like a Turk at Constantinople, where a fellow-countryman of mine assures me that they abound. I ought rather, on the contrary, to be surprised at seeing you here."

"Not at all," said Thuillier lightly. "I am here about that confounded pamphlet. Is there ever an end of your law and justice? I was called upon to appear again this morning. However, I cannot regret it, since I have been so lucky as to come across you."

And he, like la Peyrade, used the fraternal *tu*.

"I am delighted, too, to have met you," said Théodose, tying up his papers; "but I must leave you; I have an appointment. You, too, have to go into court."

"I have just come out," said Thuillier.

"Was it your favorite foe, Olivier Vinet, that you saw?"

"No," said Thuillier, and he named another judge.

"That's queer," said la Peyrade. "That youthful deputy judge seems to be ubiquitous. He has been on the bench all the morning, and pronounced judgment in a case I was defending only a minute ago."

Thuillier colored, and making the best of his blunder he said:

"Well, well! I do not know one of these men from the other. I mistook him, perhaps."

La Peyrade shrugged his shoulders and spoke his thoughts aloud to himself.

"Still the same man—finessing, wriggling, never going straight to the goal!"

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Thuillier, looking not a little out of countenance.

"Why, of you, my dear fellow, who seem to think us a pack of fools; as if everybody did not know that the case of your pamphlet was quashed this fortnight since. Come, what were you called here for?"

"I was bidden to attend," said Thuillier awkwardly, "to pay some fees or expenses to the office. How should I know what all this scribbling and scrawling is about?"

"Ha! and so they bid you to attend," said la Peyrade, "on the very day when the *Moniteur*, announcing the dissolution of the Chambers, also speaks of you as a candidate for election in the twelfth arrondissement?"

"And why not?" said Thuillier. "What connection can there be between my nomination and the costs I am called on to pay?"

"I will explain the connection," said la Peyrade dryly. "There is nothing so amiable and obliging as Justice. 'Ha-ha!' says she, 'here is good Monsieur Thuillier preparing to stand for the lower Chamber; he must be a little hampered now by his position relatively to his former friend Monsieur de la Peyrade, a little sorry now that he ever quarreled with him. I must get him out of the scrape. I will "bid him to attend" about some costs he does not owe; then he will come to the Palais where la Peyrade comes every day; thus he can meet him in the most innocent way in the world, and a proceeding which might be humiliating to his self-respect will be quite cleverly glozed over.'"

"Well, I can only be quits with you by telling you without

any sort of finesse," said Thuillier, "that I came here from your house, and it was your porter's wife who sent me here."

"Ah! that is better," said la Peyrade. "I like plain dealing. It is easy to come to an understanding with a man who plays a square game. Well, now, what is it you want of me? Did you want to discuss your election? I have been working at that already."

"Really!" said Thuillier, "and in what way?"

"Look here," said la Peyrade, fumbling under his gown and producing a paper from his pocket. "This is what I was writing just now, in court, while my opponent was beating about the bush with his precedents."

"What is it?" asked Thuillier.

"Read, and you will see."

The paper was as follows:

ESTIMATE

FOR A NEWSPAPER, QUARTO SIZE, SUBSCRIPTION THIRTY FRANCS A YEAR.

Calculating for five thousand copies, the cost *per mensem* would be:—

Paper; five reams at 12 francs		1,860 (sic)
Type-setting		2,400
Printing		450
Editor		250
Office clerk		100
Business manager and cashier		200
Despatch clerk		100
Women to fold it		120
Office boy		80
Wrappers and office expenses		150
Rent		100
Postage and stamps		7,500
Editing and reporters		1,800
Total per mensem	frs.	15,110
Total per annum		181,320

"Do you want to start a paper?" asked Thuillier, in dismay.

"I?" said la Peyrade; "I do not want anything; you must ask yourself if you want to be deputy."

"Undoubtedly, since you put that ambition into my head by getting me on to the Town Council. But consider, my dear boy, a hundred and eighty-one thousand three hundred francs to be put down! Have I a fortune that can meet such an outlay?"

"Yes," said la Peyrade. "In the first place, you could actually, and without any pinch, afford the expense, which, as compared with the end in view, is by no means exorbitant. In England a man spends a great deal more than that to get a seat in Parliament. But I would have you to observe, at the same time, that the figures in this estimate are unnecessarily high. There are certain items to be docked; for instance, you do not need a manager. You as an old accountant, and I as an ex-journalist, may well undertake the management, and do it without any trouble; in the same way we need not allow for rent, you have your old rooms in the Rue Saint-Dominique, which are not let, and will make a splendid office."

"All that," said Thuillier, "only saves us two thousand four hundred francs a year."

"That is something, at any rate; but the mistake you make is basing your calculations on a year's expenses. When is the election?"

"In two months' time."

"Well, then, for two months it will cost you just thirty thousand francs, even supposing that you never had a single subscriber."

"That is true," said Thuillier. "The outlay is certainly less than I had fancied at first. But do you really think a paper indispensable."

"So indispensable that without that weapon in our hands I will have nothing to do with the election. You do not

fully realize, my poor friend, that by settling on the other side of the river you lost ground very seriously, from the point of view of an election. You are no longer the man on the spot, and may be destroyed by a word; what the English call Absenteeism. You have a far more difficult game to play than you had."

"That I admit," said Thuillier; "but for this paper we need, besides money, a name, an editor, contributors."

"The name is ready made. The contributors are you and I, and a few of such young men as are to be found in shovelfuls in Paris. The responsible editor—well, I have a man in my eye."

"And what is the name to be?" asked Thuillier.

"The *Écho de la Bièvre.*"

"But there is a paper of that name already."

"That is the very reason why I advise you to take this matter up. Do you suppose I am fool enough to want to start a new paper? *L'Echo de la Bièvre!* The title is in itself a treasure when you want to stand for election in the twelfth arrondissement. Say the word, and that treasure is yours."

"How?" asked Thuillier, with interest.

"How? By buying it. You can have it for a mere song."

"You see," said Thuillier gloomily, "there is the purchase money you had not included."

"You are dashed by mere trifles," said la Peyrade, with a shrug. "There are far worse difficulties to be met."

"Worse difficulties!" echoed Thuillier.

"Bless me! do you suppose," said la Peyrade, "that after all that has passed between you and me, I am bold enough to go in for your election before I know exactly what I am to get by it?"

"Indeed!" said Thuillier, in some surprise, "I supposed that friendship meant the interchange of services."

"By all means. But when the interchange is all on one side, with nothing on the other, friendship gets tired of the bargain, and asks for something rather more equitable."

"But, my dear fellow, what have I to offer you but the thing you yourself rejected?"

"I rejected it, because it was not honestly offered me, and seasoned with Mademoiselle Brigitte's vinegar sauce, any self-respecting man would have acted as I did. You cannot both give a thing and keep it, is an axiom in law, and that is what you tried to do."

"For my part, I think you took offence very absurdly; however, negotiations may be reopened."

"So be it," said la Peyrade; "but I will not be dependent on the success of the election, nor the slave of Mademoiselle Céleste's whims. I ask for something definite and certain. One good turn for another. Short accounts make long friendships."

"I quite agree with you," replied Thuillier, "and I have always been too entirely honest with you, to have any reason to fear such precautions as you may take; but what do you ask as a guarantee?"

"I ask that it should be Céleste's husband who helps you on, not Théodose de la Peyrade."

"Hurry as we will, as Brigitte observed, that would take a fortnight; and, just think, out of the eight weeks before the election, we should have to stand at ease for two."

"Our names can be posted at the Mairie by the day after to-morrow," replied the Provençal, "and we may do something in the interval between the publishing of the banns. That is not, of course, an act which is absolutely irrevocable, but it is a serious pledge, and a great step in the right direction. We can have the contract drawn up by your notary; and, above all, if you make up your mind to buy the paper, as you would not want to have a horse idle in your stable, I should have no fear of your throwing me over, for the gun will be too heavy for you to handle without my help."

"But if, after all, my dear boy, the transaction should prove to be beyond my means."

"You, of course, can be the only judge of the conditions of the sale. I no more wish to buy a pig in a poke than you

do. To-morrow, if you authorize me not to deal, but to say that you might be willing to deal, I will talk the matter over with the owner, and you need not doubt that I should regard your interests as though they were my own."

"Very well, my boy, go ahead."

"And as soon as the paper is yours the day for the signing of the contract is to be fixed."

"As soon as you please," said Thuillier. "But you pledge yourself to exert all your influence in my favor?"

"As I would for my own success, and that is not altogether hypothetical; for I have had it hinted to me that I might come forward myself, and if I were vindictive——"

"There can be no doubt," said Thuillier humbly, "that you would make the better deputy. But you are not of legal age, surely?"

"There is a stronger objection than that," said la Peyrade. "You are my friend. I find you now just what you have always been, and I will keep the promise I gave you. I should like it to be said of me, 'He made deputies, but would never be made one.' Now, I must leave you and keep my appointment. Come to my office to-morrow at noon. I shall have news for you."

He who has dabbled in journalism will dabble in it again —the prediction is as certain as that relating to drunkards.

Every man who has known that life of fevered occupation and of comparative idleness and independence; who has wielded that power over intellect, art, talent, glory, virtue, ridicule, and even truth itself; who has strutted on the platform raised by his own hands and fulfilled the functions of the tribunal with which his own authority has invested him; who has, in short, if only for an hour, been the representative of public opinion, arrogating his own dignity by unanimous vote, and when thrown back into private life feeling himself in exile, like royalty sent to Cherbourg,—as soon as the opportunity offers, anxiously stretches out a hand to snatch back his crown.

From the mere fact that la Peyrade had once been a

journalist, when Étienne Lousteau placed within his reach the weapon known as the *Écho de la Bièvre,* however poor its temper, he felt all his instincts as a warrior of the press revive within him.

The journal had failed; la Peyrade believed that he could work it up again. The subscribers, as even the vendor admitted, had always been few and far between; *compelle intrare* should be brought to bear on them in a coercive and irresistible manner. And in the circumstances attending this transaction, might it not be regarded a dispensation of Providence? The lawyer, in danger of being disbarred, thus would acquire a perfectly independent position, and if he should be compelled to defend himself, might take the initiative and oblige his adversaries to treat him with respect.

In the eyes of the Thuilliers the newspaper would certainly make him a person of importance; it would give him a better chance of working the election with success; and at the same time, by employing their capital in an undertaking which, to them, without him, could only be a snare and an engulfing void, he bound them over too closely to feel any further fear of their whims or their ingratitude.

This horizon, which had opened before him since Lousteau's visit, had dazzled the Provençal, and we have seen how imperatively he had hinted to Thuillier that he must throw himself heart and soul into this search for the philosopher's stone.

The price of the property was a mere trifle. For a five-hundred-franc note, of which Étienne Lousteau gave no very clear account to the shareholders, the ownership, title-deeds, plant, and good-will of the newspaper were transferred to Thuillier; and the reorganization was at once put in hand.

This reform was in progress, when Cérizet one morning went to call on du Portail, with whom la Peyrade was more than ever resolved to avoid all contact.

"Well," said the little old gentleman to the money-lender, "have you heard what effect the information transmitted to

the President of the Board has had on our man? Has the matter got wind among the lawyers?"

"Faugh!" said Cérizet, whose increasingly frequent interviews with Monsieur du Portail had led to his assuming a certain degree of familiarity, "what the devil does it matter? The eel has slipped through our fingers. Neither gentleness nor violence can catch that limb of a man. If he has got into a scrape with his President, he is thicker than ever with his Thuilliers. 'Mutual utility,' says Figaro, 'bridges over distance.' Thuillier needs him for his nomination in the Saint-Jacques quarter; they have kissed and made friends."

"And the marriage, no doubt, is fixed to take place at an early date?" said du Portail, without seeming much impressed.

"Quite soon," said Cérizet, "and then there is another machine to work. That lunatic has persuaded Thuillier to buy a newspaper; he will let them in for forty thousand francs over this concern. Thuillier, when he finds himself in the swim, will want to get his money back, so they are likely to stick together for an unlimited period."

"What is the paper?" asked du Portail, with indifference.

"A rag, a 'cabbage-leaf,' called *L'Écho de la Bièvre*," said Cérizet scornfully, "a paper that an old journalist, out at elbows, managed to set going in the Mouffetard quarter among the curriers, that being, as you know, the chief industry in that part of the town. From the literary and political point of view, the thing is not a paper at all; but from Thuillier's it is a master-stroke of business."

"Well, for a local election the instrument is not ill-chosen," observed the old gentleman. "La Peyrade is clever, energetic, full of resource—he may make something of his *Écho*. And under what flag does Messire Thuillier sail?"

"Thuillier!" said Cérizet. "He is a mere oyster; he has no opinions. Until his pamphlet came out, he was a rabid conservative like all his class. But since the seizure of his work he has, no doubt, gone over to the opposition. Left centre was probably his first stage; but if, at the election, the

wind blows another way, he will easily back over to the extreme left. With men like that interest is the standard of conviction."

"Peste!" said du Portail, "this notion of the lawyer's might rise to the dignity of political mischief, from the point of view I take; my opinions are strongly conservative and on the side of the Government."

Then he remarked thoughtfully:

"You have dabbled in journalism, I think, Cérizet the Brave?"

"Yes," answered the money-lender. "I even managed a paper with la Peyrade—an evening paper. A nice business it was too, and we were well paid."

"Well, then," said du Portail, "why should you not do the same again, with la Peyrade?"

Cérizet looked at him with amazement.

"My word!" he said. "Are you the devil in person, monsieur, that nothing can be hidden from you?"

"Aye," said du Portail, "I know a good many things. But now, exactly how far are you and la Peyrade in agreement?"

"Thus far; that he, remembering my experience in the business, and not knowing whom he could employ, came last evening to offer me the management."

"I did not know that," said du Portail, "but it seemed probable. And you accepted?"

"Very conditionally. I asked for time to consider it. I wanted to know what you would think of the matter."

"Ah! Well, I think that when mischief cannot be hindered, it is well to get out of the scrape as best we may. I would rather see you in the plot than out of it."

"Very good. But to get in, there is a little obstacle; la Peyrade knows that I am in debt, and he declines to stand security for the thirty-three thousand francs that have to be posted in my name. Now, I have not got them; and even if I had, I should not care to admit it, and expose the sum to being seized by my creditors."

"But you still have a large sum left from the twenty-five thousand francs which la Peyrade repaid you two months ago?"

"I have just two thousand two hundred francs, fifty centimes," replied Cérizet. "I counted it over yesterday. The rest went in paying pressing creditors."

"But if you have paid you are out of debt?"

"Yes, so far as I have paid; but I still owe what I have not paid."

"Do you mean that you owed more than twenty-five thousand francs," said du Portail, in a tone of disbelief.

"Would a man become bankrupt for less?" replied Cérizet, as if stating an axiom.

"I see I shall have to stand the money," said du Portail, with annoyance. "The question is whether your coöperation in the job is likely to be worth three hundred and thirty thousand three hundred and thirty-three francs, thirty-three centimes."

"As to that," said Cérizet, "if once I were at Thuillier's elbow, I should not despair of setting him and la Peyrade by the ears before long. In the management of a paper there are no end of inevitable hitches, and by always taking the fool's part against the clever man, I should inflate the vanity of one and snub the vanity of the other to a degree which would soon make it impossible for them to work together. And then you said something about political dangers. A manager, as you must know, if he has wit enough to be more than a man of straw, can often quietly give matters a list to the side where it is needed."

"There is some truth in that," replied du Portail. "But what is most important to me is to upset la Peyrade's coach."

"Well," said Cérizet, "I fancy I have another rather insidious little trick that will demolish him as regards Thuillier."

"Out with it, then," exclaimed du Portail irritably. "You beat about the bush as if you could get anything by finessing with me."

"You remember," said Cérizet, delivering himself at last, "that some time ago Dutocq and I were excessively puzzled at the insolent fashion in which la Peyrade suddenly found himself in a position to pay that twenty-five thousand francs."

"Well," the old man eagerly put in, "have you discovered the source of that unexpected flow of money into the lawyer's hands? Is there anything discreditable in that?"

"This is the story," said Cérizet; and he related with full details the history of Madame Lambert, adding, however, that after an interview with the woman in the justice's office on the day when she had met la Peyrade there, he could get no facts out of her, though by her fencing the good lady had amply confirmed his suspicions and Dutocq's.

"Madame Lambert, Rue du Val-de-Grace, No. 9, at Monsieur Picot's, a professor of mathematics," said du Portail, writing down the address. "Very good, my dear sir. Come and see me again to-morrow," he added.

"But I beg to remind you," said the money-lender, "that I must give la Peyrade an answer in the course of to-day. He is in a hurry to settle matters."

"Very good. Accept; ask for twenty-four hours' grace to pay in the security money, and if after I have made inquiries we see any good reason for getting out of the business you will only have failed to keep your word. You will not find yourself in the dark for that."

Apart from a sort of unexplained fascination exerted by du Portail over his agent, he never missed an opportunity of reminding him of the somewhat shady beginnings of their business connection.

Next day, when Cérizet was again in the presence of his patron:

"You guessed rightly," said du Portail, "the woman Lambert, being anxious to conceal the existence of her hoard, and at the same time to hide it at good interest, thought of going to seek la Peyrade; his apparent piety recommended him to her confidence, as the money was to be handed over to h[illegible] a

without any written acknowledgment. In what form was Dutocq paid?"

"In nineteen thousand-franc notes and twelve five-hundred-franc notes."

"Exactly so," said du Portail, "and not a doubt remains. And now, with regard to Thuillier, what use do you propose to make of this information?"

"I shall hint to him that la Peyrade, who is to marry his goddaughter, is loaded with debt; that he borrows money under the rose at usurious rates; that to pay his way he will pick the newspaper profits to the bone; that his position of insolvency may come out at any moment, and do the greatest injury to the candidate who stands for election with him for a supporter."

"Not amiss," said du Portail. "But you can make a further and more decisive use of our discovery."

"Tell me, sir; I hear and obey."

"Thuillier is to this day mystified, I imagine, as to the seizure of the famous pamphlet."

"Certainly," replied the money-lender. "Only yesterday la Peyrade was saying, to show how far Thuillier's guileless stupidity could go, that he had made him swallow the most absurd invention. The worthy citizen was convinced that the attack had been prompted by Monsieur Olivier Vinet, the Attorney-General's deputy. This young lawyer had for a moment aspired to the hand of Mademoiselle Colleville, and, to the estimable Thuillier, this procedure of the law was by way of avenging the refusal of one of its members."

"Well done!" said du Portail. "To-morrow, as preliminary to another version of the business, which it will be your part to communicate to Thuillier, the good man will receive from Monsieur Vinet an emphatic and unqualified protest denying such an abuse of power as he so ridiculously believed in."

"Indeed?" said Cérizet inquisitively.

"Another explanation must then be given," du Portail went on, "and you must affirm to Thuillier that he has been the

victim of the horrible machinations of the police. As you know, that is the great business of the police—machination?"

"Precisely so," said the money-lender. "I have put my name to the statement a score of times, when I worked on the Republican papers and when——"

"When you were Cérizet the Brave," du Portail put in. "Well now, the machination of the police was this: The government was much annoyed at Thuillier's election, without Ministerial influence, to the Municipal Council of the Seine; it owed a deep grudge to an independent and patriotic citizen who had carried his nomination through with such a high hand; it also knew that this great citizen was preparing a pamphlet on the always delicate financial question, on which this dangerous adversary was an authority of great experience. What, then, was the action of this corrupt and bribing Government? Why, it circumvented the man with whom Thuillier was said to take counsel, and for the price of twenty-five thousand francs,—a mere trifle to the police,—that perfidious adviser undertook, without betraying himself, to slip into the work two or three sentences for which the writer might be haled before the bench.—Now, why should Thuillier doubt this story for an instant when he is told that la Peyrade, who, as he knows, had not a sou in the world, paid down in good money to Dutocq exactly that sum of twenty-five thousand francs?"

"The deuce!" exclaimed Cérizet. "Not a bad idea. Men like Thuillier believe everything you can tell them of the police."

"Very well, then, you understand," added du Portail, "that Thuillier will not particularly wish to secure the assistance of such a colleague, and still less to see him married to his god-daughter."

"You are a remarkable man, monsieur," said Cérizet, again approving. "But I must confess to you that I am not without some scruples as to the part you wish me to play in the

matter. La Peyrade has offered me the management of the paper, and I meanwhile am to try to squeeze him out."

"And how about the lease he kept you out of, after the most solemn promises; have you forgotten that?" asked the old man. "Besides, are we not really working for the happiness of that obstinate fellow, who so persistently evades our most benevolent intentions?"

"The result, no doubt, will absolve me," said Cérizet. "I will proceed undauntedly in the road you have pointed out to me. Still, there is one things to be considered. I cannot simply fling the facts at Thuillier's head on the first day; there must be some little preparation; whereas the caution money must be paid almost immediately."

"Listen to me, Monsieur Cérizet," said du Portail authoritatively; "if la Peyrade marries my ward, I have every intention of rewarding you for your services, and the thirty thousand francs shall be yours. Thus with thirty thousand francs from one party, and twenty-five thousand from the other, you will have got fifty-five thousand out of your friend la Peyrade's matrimonial affairs. But I do not mean to pay before I come out, as peasants do in the shows at a fair. Now, if you deposit the security, I shall be quite easy; you will no doubt find some way of saving it from your creditors' clutches. If, on the contrary, it is my money that is risked, you will be neither so anxious to protect it from danger, nor so ingenious in your methods. So you must manage, by hook or by crook, to deposit the thirty thousand francs on your own account. If all turns out well, you will have invested the money at cent per cent. That is my last word, and I listen to no arguments."

Cérizet had no time for argument, for at this moment the door suddenly opened—the interview had taken place in du Portail's study—and a fair, slender woman, with a countenance of angelic sweetness, came hastily into the room.

In her arms, wrapped in fine white baby-clothes, lay the form of an infant.

"Ah!" said she, "that wicked Katt! She assured me it

was not the doctor. But I was quite sure that I had seen him come in. Do you know, doctor," she went on, addressing Cérizet, "I am not satisfied about the child, not at all satisfied: she is pale and much thinner. I believe she is cutting her teeth."

Du Portail signed to Cérizet to accept the part so unexpectedly suggested to him, and which reminded him of that he had for a moment thought of assuming in the famous business with Madame Cardinal.

"It is evidently teething," said he. "Children are always a little pulled down at that time; but I assure you, dear madame, that there is nothing to make you at all uneasy."

"You really think so, doctor," said the crazy woman—for the reader will have understood that this was Lydie, du Portail's ward. "But only look at her poor little arms; they have dwindled to nothing."

And unpinning the outer wrappings, she showed to Cérizet a bundle of clothes which to her poor wits represented a sweet pink-and-white baby.

"Not at all, not at all," said Cérizet. "She is a little thin, no doubt; but the flesh is firm and her color healthy."

"Poor darling!" said Lydie, clasping her dream to her bosom. "Yes, I really think she is better since this morning. What must I give her, doctor? She will not take pap, nor will she touch broth of any kind."

"Well, then," said Cérizet, "try a little bread and milk. Does she fancy sweet things?"

"Oh, yes," said the poor soul, brightening; "she loves them. Would chocolate be good for her?"

"Certainly," said Cérizet; "but without vanilla; that is heating."

"What they call *chocolat de Santé,*" said Lydie, in the tone of a mother who listens to the voice of the doctor who can reassure her, as to the voice of a god. "Uncle," said she, turning to du Portail, "will you ring for Bruno, that he may go at once and buy a few pounds from Marquis?"

"Bruno is just gone out," replied the old man; "but there is no hurry; he shall go in the course of the day."

"There, she is falling asleep," said Cérizet, not sorry to put an end to a scene of which even his callous nature could not fail to feel the pathos.

"So she is," said the crazy girl, wrapping up the bundle and rising. "I will put her in her bed. Good-bye, doctor, it is very kind of you to come sometimes without being sent for; if you could only fancy how anxious we poor mothers are, and how much good you can do them with a few words! Oh, now she is crying again."

"It is but natural," said Cérizet; "she is dying for sleep; she will be far better in her cradle!"

"I will go and play her the sonata by Beethoven that my poor father was so fond of. It is wonderful how soothing it is. Good-bye, doctor," she repeated, as she stood in the doorway. "Good-bye, kind doctor."

And she kissed her hand to him.

Cérizet was quite overcome.

"You see," said du Portail, "what an angel she is; never cross, never a sharp word. Melancholy sometimes, but always from some anxiety arising from her motherly instincts. That is what makes the physicians so sure that if the reality could take the place of her constant hallucinations, it would restore her reason. Well, and that is what that fool la Peyrade refuses, with the addition of a splendid fortune! But he must be brought round or I shall lose my reputation. Hark!" he added, as they heard the piano. "Listen, what playing! A mad woman! Why, there are thousands of sane women who are not to compare with her, and whose better sense is but on the surface."

When the sonata, played with a perfection of feeling and emotion which filled Cérizet with admiration, had come to a close:

"I quite agree with you, monsieur," said he; "la Peyrade is rejecting an angel, a jewel, a pearl, and if I stood in his shoes—— But we will bring him to a better mind; and it is not with zeal alone that I will do your bidding, but with passion—fanatically."

Just as Cérizet had pronounced this oath of fidelity, outside the door of the room where du Portail had received him he heard a woman's voice, which was certainly not Lydie's.

"And is the dear *Commandeur* in his study?" asked the voice, with a slight foreign accent.

"Yes, madame; but please go into the drawing-room. My master is engaged; I will tell him you are here."

And this was the voice of Katt, the old Dutch housekeeper.

"Here—this way," said du Portail hurriedly, to Cérizet; and he opened a small door into a dark passage leading to the stairs.

The first leader in a new newspaper, by which it is introduced to the public—its profession of faith, as it is technically called—is always a difficult and laborious effort. In this particular case it was indispensable that Thuillier's aspiration to election should be hinted at, if not actually declared. The outlines of this manifesto were the subject of long discussions after la Peyrade had sketched them. Cérizet was present at the debate, for, in obedience to du Portail's instructions, he had accepted the editorship; he had not yet, however, deposited the security, taking advantage of the days of grace which, on the transfer of such property, is usually accorded to the new officials.

The discussion, skilfully fanned by the crafty moneylender, who at once put himself forward as Thuillier's flatterer, more than once grew stormy, and took an acrid tone; but as, by the code of partnership, la Peyrade was always to have the last word on every point connected with the editing, it ended in his sending the article to be printed exactly as he had written it.

Thuillier was furious at what he regarded as an abuse of power, and on the following day, finding himself alone with Cérizet, while hastening to pour his woes and grievances into the ear of his faithful manager, he gave him the most natural opening for repeating the calumnious revelations he had plotted with the old man in the Rue Honoré-Chevalier.

The insinuation was hinted with a skill and moderation which would have taken in a keener judgment than Thuillier's. Cérizet affected to be frightened at having betrayed a secret dragged from him by the fervor of his zeal, and by the sympathy commanded by the dignity of mind and character, which had struck him from the first in Thuillier. Thuillier reassured the traitor by pledging himself that Cérizet's name should not even be hinted at in the explanation to which this information might probably lead. He would allow it to be supposed that it had reached him from another source, and, at a pinch, would direct suspicion to Dutocq. So, leaving the dart in the wound, Cérizet went away to make certain arrangements for the final settlement of the security.

The scene had taken place in the office. Ever since he had concluded the purchase, Thuillier, coming to the office two hours sooner than was necessary, spent his day there, wearing everybody to death with his officious restlessness; he came back again after dinner; he would almost have slept there, and at the rare times when he was visible to his family, he had nothing to say but lamentations over his fatigue under such a multiplicity of occupations, till it might have been supposed that he must succumb to the burden, or seriously injure his health.

Thuillier, thus crammed with the dreadful revelation, could not sit still; he wanted to disburden himself, to talk over the attitude he ought to assume under such a diabolical plot. So he sent for a hackney cab, and within a quarter of an hour he had poured it all out to his Egeria, his beloved sister Brigitte.

Brigitte had been strenuously antagonistic to all that Thuillier had done during the last few days. To begin with, on no account whatever, not even to secure her brother's election, would she have had him renew his relations with la Peyrade. She had a deep grudge against him, the strongest grounds for a lasting estrangement. And then, in the event of this intriguing rogue, as she called him, marrying Céleste after all, the dread of seeing her own influence diminished giving

her a sort of second sight, she saw at last all the black depths of the Provençal's character, and declared that on no consideration whatever, in any circumstances, would she agree to be one in a joint household with him.

Thuillier, rabid with ambition, had changed the subject; he hoped to cure his sister later of these prejudices. But when, on the top of this, the question of the newspaper was raised, he found Brigitte in a frame of antagonism amounting to acrimony.

"Ruin yourself, my dear," said she; "it is your own business. What comes in by the flute goes out by the drum."

However, when the purchase was concluded, when Brigitte had been consulted as to various details of the management, in which she found new play for her economical skill, when she had been able to place two women as folders in the office, and had promoted her concierge of the Rue Saint-Dominique to be the office "boy," diminishing his wages as doorkeeper there by two hundred francs, in consideration of this plurality; when she had been entrusted with the purchase of the calico for the office curtains, of the lamps, shovels, and tongs, and had been requested to look in from time to time, and keep an eye on the washing of the inkstands, the sweeping of the floors, and other little details of order and cleanliness, her ill-humor was considerably mollified; so that now, as she listened to her brother's confidential narrative, she responded not with reproaches, but with a sort of pæan of triumph in honor of the probable increase of her own powers.

"So much the better!" cried she. "At last we know for certain that he is a skunk. I always suspected that sneak. Turn him out of doors without a word. We do not want him; we can manage the paper without him. That Monsieur Cérizet, who, from what you say of him, must be such a good fellow, will find us another man. And Madame de Godollo, when she left, promised to write to me; as soon as I hear from her, she will have no difficulty in finding somebody! Our poor Céleste! A pretty dish we were cooking for her!"

"You go too fast," said Thuillier. "La Peyrade, my dear, is only accused; he must first be heard; besides, we are bound by an agreement."

"Oh, very well!" retorted Brigitte. "I see the whole thing. You will be entrapped again. An agreement with that sneak! As if such men as he were to hold or to bind!"

"Come, come, compose yourself, my dear Brigitte," said Thuillier. "We must not let temper run away with us. Certainly, unless la Peyrade can justify himself,—and in the clearest, fullest, and most categorical manner,—I shall have done with him, and I will show you that I am no chicken-hearted gaby. But Cérizet himself has no evidence, only inferences; and I came to consult you merely as to whether or no I should demand an explanation."

"Not a doubt of it," said Brigitte, "and a complete explanation too, or I deny you as my brother."

"That is enough," said Thuillier, departing with solemnity. "You will see that you and I are of one mind in such matters."

The arrangements made for the establishment of the *Écho de la Bièvre* in the apartment in the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer were as yet very incomplete, for they had been made in great haste; the old offices in the Rue des Noyers had seemed uninhabitable for an hour; the house was of the most squalid appearance, and in going over the furniture included in the deed of sale, Thuillier had been considerably disappointed.

The inventory of this property was something as follows:—

1. Three tables of black stained wood.
2. Six chairs, with their straw seats complete, or nearly so—like the famous Bologna lute immortalized by Molière.
3. A set of pigeon-holes, also in wood stained black, and used for storing the back numbers of the paper according to their dates.
4. An earthenware cistern covered with wicker, an article gone out of fashion, but large enough to contain six pails of water.

5. Three candlesticks and a pair of snuffers, the illumination of the office under the old management not having risen even to the dignity of snuffless "moulds."

6. A water-bottle and two glasses.

7. Nine empty bottles, most of which, if we may believe the printed labels, had contained the best Jamaica rum and genuine Swiss absinthe.

But the thing that gave the crowning stamp to the establishment, justifying Léon de Lora's famous proverb: "It is a long lane that has no burning," was a splendid store of peats discovered in a cupboard of the editor's room, large, dry, compact, and durable; fuel, in short, of prime quality, showing very plainly that the original shareholders had had a finger in the purchase.

The list being verified, Thuillier, after the first quarter of an hour's disgust, saw that something must be done, and jumping into a cab, he was driven to the Rue Chapon.

Next day a painter was instructed to inscribe on one of the doors of the new rooms, the sacramental formula: *Office and cashier;* the room was divided by a boarding with a brass railing above; and on each side of the opening where subscriptions could be paid, this grating was provided with green cotton curtains hung by Brigitte to a brass rod.

In the editor's room, also protected by a legend in smaller characters, *No admittance except on business,* were a dozen cherry-wood chairs, a high desk of oak, and a large oval table not yet covered with a green cloth, as Mademoiselle Brigitte had undertaken to find one second-hand; a case for papers, a Dutch clock hanging on the wall and striking like a village church-bell. All this, with two ancient maps made by Samson, "Geographer to the King," composed a very decent temporary outfit.

And at the moment when Thuillier, returning from his conclave with Brigitte, came into the editor's office, the crowning consecration was given to the existence of the newspaper; a printer's devil brought in from the press a ream of sheets

headed with the style, title, and address of the *Écho*. Until the head-line is in type the paper cannot be said to exist. This is, so to speak, its baptism, and that is why the founders of a newspaper always begin by this great symbolical act; they are afraid lest the bantling should die unchristened.

Thuillier found la Peyrade at his post as editor, but during the last quarter of an hour the lawyer had been considerably embarrassed by the final authority he had arrogated to himself as to the choice of articles and writers. Phellion, prompted by his family, and as a corollary to his functions as a member of the committee of the Odéon, had come to propose himself as a contributor of articles on the stage.

"My dear monsieur," said he, after inquiring of Thuillier as to his health, "I was a very constant play-goer in my young days: theatrical performances, all through my somewhat long career, have had an unfailing and special interest in my eyes, and the white hairs which now crown my brow do not seem to me an obstacle in the way of my giving your interesting publication the benefit of my studies and of my experience. As a member of the Reading Committee of the Odéon, I have refreshed my impressions in the modern spring, and if I were quite sure of your secrecy I might go so far as to tell you that you might even find among my private documents a certain tragedy entitled *Sapor*, which in my golden days had some little success when I read it to a circle of friends."

"Well," said la Peyrade, anxious to soften the refusal that was inevitable, "but why not try now to get it put upon the stage? We might be of use in helping you."

"Of course," said Thuillier, "a theatrical manager to whom we could introduce the work——"

"No," said Phellion. "In the first place, as a member of the Reading Committee of the Odéon, called upon to pronounce on the works of others, it would ill become me to enter the arena. I am an old athlete, whose function now is to be umpire and judge of the blows he can no longer deliver. From that point of view criticism is quite within my province;

all the more so because I have, I believe, some quite new ideas as to the manner of composing a theatrical article. *Castigat ridendo mores* is in my humble opinion the grand rule, nay, let me say the only rule, of the stage. Hence I shall be merciless in dealing with purely imaginative works in which moral lessons have no place, and which the wisdom of a mother——"

"Forgive me for interrupting you," said la Peyrade, "but before giving you the trouble of expatiating on your theory I ought to tell you that we have already made our arrangements for theatrical criticism."

"Ah! Then, indeed," replied Phellion, "an honest man has but one word."

"Yes," said Thuillier, "we have a man. It never occurred to us that you would come to offer us the honor of your assistance."

"Well, then," said Phellion, becoming eager,—for in the atmosphere of a newspaper there is a mysterious element that mounts to a man's head, especially a man of the middle class,—"since you are kind enough to imply that my pen might be of some service to you, possibly some detached reflections on different subjects, under the 'varieties,' thoughts which I do not hesitate to describe as 'detached,' might prove to some extent interesting."

"Yes," said la Peyrade, with a mischievous intent which Phellion failed to detect, "detached thoughts by all means, especially in the style of Rochefoucauld or la Bruyère; what do you say, Thuillier?" He was determined to leave the responsibility of a refusal as often as possible to the proprietor.

"It seems to me," said Thuillier, "that such thoughts, if they were detached, would be rather wanting in connection."

"Obviously," replied Phellion. "When I say 'detached thoughts,' I convey the idea of a vast number of subjects round which the writer's pen may play without connecting them into a whole."

"And you would, of course, sign your name in full?" said la Peyrade.

"Oh, no," exclaimed Phellion in dismay. "I should not like to put myself forward so conspicuously."

"That coyness, which I entirely understand and approve of," said la Peyrade, "settles the question. The 'detached thought' or aphorism is a peculiarly personal thing, and must absolutely be individualized by a name. You must yourself see that 'thoughts by Mr. Dash' can have no meaning to the public."

Seeing that Phellion was still prepared with arguments, Thuillier, in a hurry to come to high words with the Provençal, made up his mind to cut the matter short.

"My dear Phellion," said he, "I beg your pardon for saying that we must no longer enjoy the pleasure of your conversation; but I have to discuss an important article with la Peyrade, and in making up a paper time flies like the devil. We will, if you please, postpone this matter till another day. Madame Phellion is quite well, I hope?"

"Quite well," replied the other, rising without seeming offended by his dismissal. "When does the first number come out?" he added. "It is eagerly looked for in the arrondissement."

"Our profession of faith will, I hope, appear to-morrow," said Thuillier, seeing him to the door, "and it is high time; for, if we set up nothing but the leavings in the editor's drawer, we shall soon put the subscribers to flight. But you will, of course, have a copy sent you, my dear friend, and we shall see you again ere long? Bring us some copy; la Peyrade is, perhaps, a little too dogmatic."

Balm thus shed on the wound, and Phellion fairly off the premises, Thuillier rang for the office-boy.

"You would know that gentleman again, wouldn't you?" he asked.

"Yes, m'sieur, he has a queer enough phiz of his own. Besides, it is Monsieur Phellion; I have let him in often enough, I should think."

"Well, whenever he comes, neither I nor Monsieur de la Peyrade are ever in the place. Remember that, without exception. Now go."

"The devil!" said la Peyrade, when they were alone, "you have a short way with bores. Be careful, however. There might happen to be a few voters among them; you were wise to tell Phellion he should have the paper; he is a man of importance in that quarter."

"Pooh!" said Thuillier, "can we let our time be wasted by every vaporing idler who may come to offer his contributions? And it was no idle excuse that I made to Phellion. I have something to discuss with you, and very seriously too. Take a chair and listen to me."

"Do you know, my dear old boy, that journalism is making you a very solemn personage? *'Take a chair, Cinna.'* Augustus himself might have spoken no otherwise."

"And Cinnas are unfortunately commoner than might be supposed," replied Thuillier.

He was still moved by the impetus of his promise to Brigitte, and intended to be scathingly satirical; the top was still in violent rotation from the stroke of the old maid's lash.

La Peyrade sat down by the oval table. As he was genuinely puzzled, to give himself countenance, he took up the large scissors which were used for cutting out borrowed paragraphs from other papers, and snipped a sheet of paper on which an article had been sketched, but not worked up, by Thuillier.

The Provençal was seated, but yet Thuillier did not begin; he rose and went to the door, which stood ajar, intending to shut it. But as he reached it it was thrown wide open by Coffinet.

"Monsieur," said he to la Peyrade, "can you see two ladies who wish to speak to you?"

"Who are the ladies?" asked the lawyer.

"Well-dressed ladies, sir,—a mother and daughter, I should say; the daughter not to be sneezed at."

"Shall they be shown in?" la Peyrade asked of Thuillier, "or would you rather that I should see them in the waiting-room?"

"As they have been told that you are here, have them in," said Thuillier, "but try to get rid of them quickly."

And the proprietor of the *Écho de la Bièvre* paced the room with his hands behind his back; there was a reminiscence of Napoleon in his attitude.

Coffinet's opinion as to the dress of the two visitors whom he now showed into the office was certainly open to revision. A woman is well dressed, not when she wears handsome and expensive clothes, but when her attire, which may be of the utmost simplicity, shows a quiet harmony of shape and color which makes it essentially the dress for her. Now, a bonnet with a very shallow front—called *bibi* in the lingo of the day, trimmed with nodding flowers, and set so far back that it seemed to be worn as a protection to the shoulders rather than as a setting to the face; a large French cashmere shawl, worn with the awkward inexperience of a bride; a dress of tartan silk in large checks with three flights of flouncing; a quantity of chains and charms,—but faultless gloves and shoes it must be owned,—composed the attire of the younger woman. As to the other, in tow as it were of her smarter consort, she was short, thick-set, with a high color, and wore a gown, a shawl, and a bonnet, in which a practised eye would at once have recognized, if not the rag-fair tone of the *Temple*, at least an unmistakable stamp of "second-hand." The actress' mother—of whom the indescribable type stood incarnate before la Peyrade—is always arrayed by these inexpensive means; the garments she wears, fated to do duty for two generations, reversing the natural order of things, after serving the young have reverted to the old.

After politely setting two chairs, "Whom have I the honor of addressing?" asked la Peyrade.

"Monsieur," said the younger visitor, who had unceremoniously come in before the elder, "I beg to introduce myself under the auspices of one of your legal colleagues, Monsieur Minard, the advocate."

"Indeed, most happy," said the Provençal. "And what is the matter he recommends to my services?"

"Monsieur, I am a dramatic artist. I made my first ap-

pearance on any stage in this part of the town, and that makes me hope that a local paper may be favorable to me; I have lately left the Luxembourg theatre, where I was leading lady."

"And now you are——?"

"At the *Folies,* monsieur, where I take Déjazet's parts."

"The *Folies?"* repeated la Peyrade, in a tone that demanded enlightenment.

"The Folies-Dramatiques," Madame Cardinal put in with an engaging smile—the reader will no doubt have identified her. "These young ladies have a trick, you see, of shortening the names. In the *Délassements Comiques* they say Délass-Com. I always tell them that it is shocking bad style. In business, now, it is just the other way about. In the fish line, for instance, you would never say 'Skate, skate,' but 'Fresh skate, all alive, oh!' That sounds to me ever so much better."

"Mother!" said the leading lady, with imperious severity, for Madame Cardinal, carried away by old habits, as she ended her speech had fallen into the sing-song cry of her trade as a fish-hawker.

"And you are coming out there soon?" asked la Peyrade.

"Yes, monsieur, in a part in which I have five dresses: a page's costume, the uniform of a little drummer of the cadets of the Imperial Guard, a great coquette, a dress *à la Dugazon,* with a long waist, and then the Fairy Lilas, appearing at the end in a glow of colored fire."

"Very well, mademoiselle," said la Peyrade, "I will instruct our theatrical critic to pay particular attention to your first appearance."

"And to give her a little encouragement, monsieur?" said Madame Cardinal, in wheedling entreaty. "She is such a young thing! And though I say it as oughtn't, I can answer for it she works day and night."

"Mother!" said Olympe severely. "I must take my chance. It is enough if the gentleman will only promise that I shall have a notice. So many pieces are brought out at the Folies that nobody thinks about; but, as I say, belonging to this part of the town——"

"Quite so, mademoiselle," said la Peyrade conclusively. "My colleague Minard is well, I hope?"

"Oh, yes; he spent the evening with us yesterday, putting me through my parts."

"Pray give him my compliments," said la Peyrade, as he saw the ladies to the door.

Olympe Cardinal went out first, as she had come in, leaving a distance of about twenty yards between herself and her mother, who with difficulty kept pace with her.

"Well, what do you say to Monsieur Minard?" asked la Peyrade of Thuillier as he came back, "one of the suitors for Céleste's hand. There is a man who can bear to wait."

"Not at home to anybody," cried Thuillier to the office-boy, as he shut the door and bolted it. "Now, my good fellow," he added to la Peyrade, "I really must talk to you.—My dear boy," said Thuillier, beginning in a tone of irony,—he had heard that nothing so discomfited an adversary,—"I have heard something that will delight you, I am sure; I have been told why my pamphlet was seized."

And he fixed la Peyrade with his eye.

"The deuce!" said la Peyrade, with perfect simplicity, "it was seized because they were bent on seizing it. They sought, and they found—as anything can be found if you look for it—passages which the King's advisers chose to call seditious doctrine."

"No, you are quite mistaken," replied Thuillier. "The seizure was a thing plotted, prepared, arranged beforehand,"

"And by whom?" asked la Peyrade.

"By those who wanted to crush the pamphlet in concert with those who pledged themselves to the treachery."

"At any rate the purchasers made no great bargain," retorted the lawyer, "for even as a victim to persecution I do not see that your work has made any great sensation."

"But how about the sellers?" said Thuillier, with exacerbated irony.

"Well, they were the cleverer, no doubt," said la Peyrade.

"Yes, I know," said Thuillier, "you think a great deal of

being clever; but allow me to observe that the police, whose hand I can plainly trace in this matter, is not apt, as a rule, to throw money out of the window."

And again he stared hard at the lawyer.

"So you think you have discovered that the police had bargained in advance for the suppression of the pamphlet?" said la Peyrade, without wincing.

"Yes, my dear sir; and I even know for certain the price paid to the person who undertook this honorable task."

"The person?" said la Peyrade. "It is not impossible that by giving my mind to it I might also know who it was; as to the amount, I have no idea about it at all."

"Well, but I can state the figures—twenty-five thousand francs," said Thuillier emphatically. "That was the sum paid over to Judas."

"Excuse me, my dear fellow, but twenty-five thousand francs is a large sum of money. You are a man of importance, that I do not deny; at the same time you are scarcely such a bugbear to the Government as to be worth so large an outlay. Twenty-five thousand francs is as much as would be paid to choke off some famous pamphlet attacking the administration of the civil list; but our financial treatise did not aim so high, and such a sum of money drawn from the secret service fund merely for the pleasure of playing you a trick, seems to me rather fabulously large."

"It would seem, then," said Thuillier bitterly, "that the worthy traitor had some object in exaggerating my importance. One thing is certain: that gentleman owed twenty-five thousand francs, a debt that worried him a good deal, and a little while before the seizure the said gentleman suddenly found himself in a position to pay. Now, unless you can tell me where he found the money, the inference, it strikes me, is one you will not find it hard to draw."

It was now la Peyrade who stared at Thuillier.

"Monsieur Thuillier," said he, raising his voice, "will you be good enough to have done with general statements and enigmas, and name your man?"

"No, I will not," said Thuillier, striking the table with his fist. "I will not name him, in consideration of the feelings of affection and esteem which have so long united us. But you have understood me, Monsieur de la Peyrade."

"I have understood," said the Provençal, in a voice hoarse with emotion. "And I might have known that when I brought a serpent into the place I should ere long be fouled by its venom. You poor fool, do you not see that you are merely echoing some slander of Cérizet's?"

"Cérizet has nothing to do with it; on the contrary, he had nothing but good to say of you. But answer me; how was it that, not having a sou one day, as I know to my cost, on the next you were in a position to pay over to Dutocq the round sum of twenty-five thousand francs?"

La Peyrade reflected a minute.

"No," said he decisively, "it was not Dutocq who told you; he is not the man to take so strong an enemy on his hands as I should be, unless it were very greatly to his interest. The rascally accuser is Cérizet, from whom I snatched your house near the Madeleine; Cérizet, whom I, in my long endurance, sought out on his dunghill to place him in a respectable position; that wretch, to whom every benefit received is but an encouragement to some fresh treachery. Faugh! If I were to tell you all that man has been, I should sicken you with loathing; he has discovered new worlds in the realms of infamy."

Thuillier's answer this time was to the purpose.

"I know not who or what Cérizet may be," said he. "I am acquainted with him only through you, who introduced him as an editor entirely to be relied on. But, if he were as black as the devil, and supposing that the information had come to me through him, that, my boy, would not make you a shade whiter."

"It is true," said la Peyrade, "it is my fault that you have had anything to do with him; but we wanted a man who understood the working of a newspaper, and he had that merit for us. Can the depths of such natures ever be gauged? I believed him reformed. The responsible manager, after all,

thought I, is but meat for the jail, a signing machine. I fancied there would be in him the stuff for a man of straw; I was mistaken; he will never be anything but a man of mud."

"That is all very fine," said Thuillier, "but as regards those twenty-five thousand francs that dropped so opportunely into your hands, where did they come from? That is what you omit to explain."

"But use your common sense," said la Peyrade. "How should a man in my position go drawing on the reserve fund of the police; a man so poor that I could not even fling the money in the teeth of your harpy of a sister when she called on me to produce ten thousand francs with the insolence you yourself witnessed?"

"Well, well," said Thuillier, "but if the money came from an honest source, as I am more than ready to believe, what hinders you from telling me?"

"I cannot," replied the lawyer; "the source of that money is a professional secret."

"What next! Why, you yourself have told me that the rules of your cloth forbid your meddling in money transactions."

"And, granting that I have done something not quite regular," said la Peyrade, "it would be strange, I think, after all I have risked for you, if you had the face to blame me."

"My poor fellow, you are trying to spoil the scent, but you will not put us off the track. You want to keep your secret; well, keep it. I am master of my confidence and esteem, and I shall simply pay you the forfeit as stipulated in our agreement, and remain sole master of the paper."

"Indeed! you turn me out!" cried la Peyrade. "The money you have invested in the concern, and your hopes of election —you are prepared to sacrifice everything to an imputation brought by a Cérizet?"

"In the first place, as to a man to fill your place, they are to be found, my good fellow. It was said long ago, the indispensable man does not exist. As to the election, I would

rather never be returned at all, than owe it to the help of a man——"

"Finish your sentence," said la Peyrade, seeing Thuillier hesitate. "Or, no, be silent rather, for you will certainly blush at your suspicions, and ask my pardon on your knees."

The Provençal clearly saw that unless he made up his mind to confess, the influence and prospects he had just recovered would slip from his hold.

He went on with great gravity:

"You will remember, my friend, that you are quite ruthless, and that by subjecting me to a sort of moral torture, you are forcing me to reveal a secret that is not my own."

"Go on, all the same," said Thuillier. "I will take the responsibility. Only show me light in this darkness, and I will be the first to acknowledge myself wrong."

"Well, then," said la Peyrade, "the twenty-five thousand francs were the savings of a servant—a woman who came to implore me to keep the money and pay her interest."

"A woman-servant who has saved twenty-five thousand francs! By heaven, she must have lived in a good house."

"On the contrary, she is housekeeper to a feeble old professor, and it was because her possession of such a sum seemed so improbable, that she was anxious to make me a sort of trustee by leaving it in my hands."

"On my honor," said Thuillier, in a mocking tone, "we wondered where we were to get romances for our paper, but with you here, I need never be uneasy. This is imagination, I may say, with a vengeance."

"What!" exclaimed la Peyrade, "you do not believe me?"

"No, I do not believe you. Twenty-five thousand francs saved in the service of an old professor! Why, it is about as credible as the story of the captain of the *Dame Blanche,* who bought an estate out of his pay."

"But if I prove the truth of my statement, if you put your finger on it?"

"Then, like Saint Thomas, I will dip my flag to evidence. But, my worthy friend, you must allow me to wait till the proof is before me."

Thuillier thought himself magnificent. "I would give two louis," said he to himself, "if Brigitte were here to see how I am handling him."

"Come, then," replied la Peyrade, "supposing that, without going out of this room, by merely writing a note under your own eyes, I bring here the person from whom I had the money, and she confirms my statement, will you believe me then?"

This proposition, and the confidence with which it was made, could not but stagger Thuillier.

"Then, indeed," said he, changing his tone. "And you will do it, to-day; now, while we sit here?"

"I said without leaving the room; that is plain enough, I should think."

"And who is to carry the note?" asked Thuillier. He fancied that by thus insisting on every detail he was displaying the profoundest acumen.

"Who is to carry it? Why, your messenger, of course, to whom you may hand it yourself."

"Well, then, write it," said Thuillier, determined to corner his man.

La Peyrade took a sheet of paper and wrote, saying each word aloud:

"Madame Lambert is requested to come at once, on important business, to the office of the paper, *Écho de la Bièvre*, Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, whither the bearer will conduct her. She is impatiently awaited there by her

"Very obedient servant,

"THÉODOSE DE LA PEYRADE."

"There, will that satisfy you?" said he, handing the sheet to Thuillier.

"Perfectly," said Thuillier, taking the precaution to fold the note and seal it himself.

"Now for the address," said he, and the note went back into la Peyrade's hands.

Thuillier rang for Coffinet.

"You must take this note," said he to the porter, "to the person to whom it is addressed, and bring her back with you. But will she be at home?" he asked.

"It is more than likely," replied la Peyrade. "But at any rate neither you nor I leave this place till she comes. We must see daylight!"

"Go," said Thuillier to the messenger, with a theatrical air.

As soon as they were alone, la Peyrade took up a newspaper and seemed lost in study.

Thuillier, by this time rather uneasy as to the upshot of the matter, was now sorry that he had not sooner had an idea which dawned on him too late.

"I ought to have torn up the note and not have carried the test any farther." Being anxious to appear to reinstate la Peyrade in the position from which he had threatened to dismiss him:

"I say," he remarked, "I called at the printer's on my way. The new type is delivered, and I think we may get our first number out to-morrow."

La Peyrade made no answer, but rose and carried his paper to the window.

"He is annoyed with me," thought Thuillier, "and not without cause if he is guiltless. But then—why did he bring that Cérizet on to the premises?"

To cover his discomfiture and anxiety he sat down to the editor's table, and taking a sheet of paper with the heading, set himself to write a letter.

La Peyrade, on his part, soon sat down again, and taking some paper, set to work, his pen flying over the page with the feverish haste that betrays agitation of mind.

Out of the corner of his eye Thuillier tried to see what his colleague was writing; and, observing that he was dividing his paragraphs, with a number in the margin of each,—

"Why," said he, "are you sketching a scheme for a law?"

"Yes," said la Peyrade coldly: "the law of the beaten."

A few minutes after, the messenger opened the door and

showed in Madame Lambert, whom he had found at home, and who had come with him somewhat scared.

"You are Madame Lambert?" asked Thuillier in an austere tone.

"Yes, monsieur," she replied, in a quavering voice.

After desiring her to be seated, seeing that Coffinet was standing as if awaiting further orders:

"That will do," he added. "Go, and admit nobody."

Thuillier's solemnity and severe manner had aggravated Madame Lambert's alarm. She had expected to meet only la Peyrade, and she found herself in the presence of a stranger with a very morose air, while the lawyer, who had merely bowed to her, spoke not a word. Moreover, the scene was taking place in a newspaper office; and, as we all know, in the eyes of the very pious everything that has to do with the press savors of the pit and the devil.

"Well," said Thuillier to the lawyer, "there is nothing to hinder you, that I can see, from explaining to the lady why you sent for her."

To remove Thuillier's suspicions la Peyrade was bound to attack the subject rudely and without any preliminaries.

"We want to ask you, madame," said he *ex abrupto*, "whether, two months since, you did not place in my hands, in trust, at interest, the sum of twenty-five thousand francs?"

Though Madame Lambert felt that Thuillier and the Provençal both had their eye on her, at this point-blank question she could not repress a little jump.

"Lord in Heaven!" she exclaimed, "twenty-five thousand francs! Where on earth should I have got such a sum?"

La Peyrade's face did not betray such disappointment as might have been expected. Thuillier turned to him with a look of pain and pity.

"You see, my dear fellow——" said he.

"Then you are quite sure, madame," said the lawyer, "that you did not hand over to me a sum of twenty-five thousand francs. You declare it, you would swear to it?"

"Indeed, sir, is it a likely story that a poor woman like me

and twenty-five thousand francs should ever have gone in at the same door together? What little money I have ever had, as every one knows, I have spent on housekeeping for the poor dear gentleman I have served this twenty years past."

"This seems to me unanswerable," said Thuillier pompously.

La Peyrade showed not the faintest shadow of distress; on the contrary, with an air of yielding completely to Thuillier, he said:

"You hear, my good friend, and I may call upon you to prove, that this lady never had twenty-five thousand francs, consequently she can never have given them to me. So, as the notary, Monsieur Dupuis, in whose hands I fancied I had deposited the sum in my own name, went off to Brussels this morning with all his clients' money, I have nothing to refund to Madame Lambert, and Dupuis escapes——"

"Monsieur Dupuis, the notary, has run away!" gasped Madame Lambert, carried away by this terrible news out of her usually sweet demeanor and Christian resignation. "I declare, what a villain! Only this morning he was taking the sacrament at Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas!"

"To ensure a prosperous journey, no doubt," replied la Peyrade.

"You can talk lightly enough, sir," said the woman, "but the swindler has carried off all my savings; and as a matter of fact, I did give them to you, monsieur, and you will be answerable—I look only to you."

"Now, then," said la Peyrade to Thuillier, indicating Madame Lambert, in whose whole demeanor there was something of the she-wolf just robbed of her cubs, "is that spontaneous —natural—or do you think we have got up this little comedy?"

"I am speechless," replied Thuillier, "amazed at Cérizet's impudence and my own stupidity; I can only surrender at discretion."

"Madame," said la Peyrade pleasantly, "get over your terrible alarm. The notary Dupuis is still a saintly man, and

quite incapable of robbing his clients; your money is still perfectly safe in his hands. As to this gentleman,—to whom it was necessary that I should prove having, in fact, received that sum from you,—he is my second self, and your secret, though known to him, still dwells locked in my bosom."

"Very good, monsieur," said Madame Lambert; "then, gentlemen, you have nothing more to say to me?"

"No, dear madame, and I can only beg your forgiveness for having been obliged to give you such a fright."

Madame Lambert left the room with every sign of the most respectful humility; but at the door she turned back and said to la Peyrade, in a tone of the most bland suavity:

"When, sir, do you think you could make it convenient to let me have my money back?"

"I told you plainly," replied la Peyrade stiffly, "that notaries never return on demand the moneys they have invested."

"Do you think, sir, that if I went myself to Monsieur Dupuis to ask him to oblige——?"

"I think," said the lawyer sharply, "that by going to him you would do a perfectly idiotic thing. He had the money from me, in my name, as you wished, and knows nothing of any one else."

"Then, sir, will you be so good as to attend to the matter and get back that little sum, which is but a trifle to you? I do not wish to hurry you, sir, as is but fair; but within two or three months I may find a use for it; I was told of a little freehold that might be just the thing."

"All right, Madame Lambert," answered la Peyrade, with suppressed irritation. "I will do as you wish, and sooner perhaps than you expect I shall hope to hand you over your money."

"If quite convenient, sir," said the bigot. "You told me that at the least indiscretion on my part you would——"

"Yes, yes, of course," said the Provençal, interrupting her.

"I have the honor to be your very humble servant—gentlemen both," said the woman, who this time really went away.

"You see, my dear fellow," said Théodose, when he was

alone with Thuillier, "to what straits I am brought by the necessity for humoring your sick brain. This debt was dormant, in a chronic state, and now you have roused it to the acute form."

"I am grieved, my dear friend, to think of my stupid credulity. But do not be worried about the woman's demands; we will arrange the matter, and even if I have to advance the money on the marriage settlements——"

"Come what may, my excellent friend," said la Peyrade, "we must begin by reconsidering our personal arrangements. I do not choose to be hauled over the coals every morning; and just now, while we were waiting for that woman, I sketched the outlines of a little agreement which we will talk over and sign, if you please, before our first number comes out."

"But our deed of partnership," said Thuillier, "affords as it seems to me a charter——"

"Which, as clause 14 provides, by the payment of a miserable forfeit of five thousand francs, you may treat as so much waste paper. Thank you for nothing! We will have something a little tighter than that."

At this moment Cérizet came in. His manner was swaggering and triumphant.

"I have brought the money, my masters," said he, "and in an hour the security will be signed and sealed."

But remarking that his news was received with extreme coldness,—

"Why, what is the matter?" he asked.

"The matter," said Thuillier, "is that I have no dealings with double-faces and slanderers; that we will have nothing to do with you or your money, and that I advise you not to honor these premises with your presence for another minute."

"Heyday! heyday!" exclaimed Cérizet. "What, is our dear old Thuillier caught once more?"

"Go, sir," said Thuillier, "you have no further business here."

"Hallo, my boy!" said Cérizet to la Peyrade, "you seem to have turned the good man's cream sour. Well, he did not

invent the printing-press, and we have seen what you can do. Never mind, I consider that you were wrong in not going to see du Portail, and I will tell him——"

"Are you going?" said Thuillier in an ominous tone.

"Well, well, my good sir," replied the money-lender, "I did not come to seek you. I managed to live before your day, and I can live after it. Only try to escape paying the twenty-five thousand francs out of your own pocket, for you are within an inch of it, I can tell you."

Thus speaking, Cérizet replaced his pocketbook, with the thirty-three thousand francs in banknotes, in his breast-pocket, and, taking up his hat, which he had placed on the table, he carefully polished it with his coat-sleeve, and departed.

Cérizet's tale-bearing had led Thuillier to attempt a most luckless campaign. He was now la Peyrade's humble slave, and obliged to submit to all his terms. The lawyer was to have five hundred francs a month for his services to the journal; all his contributions were to be separately paid for at the rate of fifty francs a column, an exorbitant figure in view of the small size of the sheet. The paper was to be kept going for six months, under pain of a forfeit of fifteen thousand francs; and as the chief contributor he stipulated for despotic omnipotence, absolutely free to insert, alter, or reject any article without even assigning his reasons for the decision; such were the ostensible conditions of the agreement made in duplicate and signed in good faith by both parties.

But in virtue of another and private document, Thuillier undertook to stand security for the sum of twenty-five thousand francs due from la Peyrade to the bigot; "the aforementioned la Peyrade, pleader-at-law, of the second part," promising that in the event of his marrying Mademoiselle Céleste Colleville, and of the money having been meanwhile disbursed by Thuillier, he would acknowledge the sum paid on demand as received in advance out of the bride's fortune. By this ingenious trick the crafty Provençal evaded

the law, which allows no such forestalling of money in consideration of a marriage. For what else than a payment on account was this sum of twenty-five thousand francs, for which Thuillier had no security whatever but the conclusion of the match, which was still no more than a proposal in the air?

Matters thus arranged and ratified by the candidate for election, who, but for la Peyrade, saw no chance of success, Thuillier had a happy idea. He went to hunt up, at the Cirque-Olympique, where he had seen the man taking tickets at the entrance, a retired clerk who had been in his office, named Fleury, and offered him Cérizet's place. Fleury, formerly in the army, a good shot, a capital swordsman, would certainly be the man to command respect in the office. Not less dexterous in the art of "leading creditors a dance," he was the first in the Exchequer office to hit on the ingenious idea of inventing spurious claims on his salary, so as to nullify any real claims that might be put in to stop his pay. He adopted the same means to preserve from his creditors the thirty-three thousand three hundred and thirty-three francs thirty-three centimes which he was required by law to deposit in his name.

The paper thus constituted, and lacking only a few contributors, who could presently be found, la Peyrade, meanwhile, with his ready pen, being quite able to fill their place, the first number appeared.

Thuillier once more began the excursions through Paris in which we found him embarked when his pamphlet was published. He would walk into a reading-room or a café, and call for the *Écho de la Bièvre,* and when, as was unfortunately too often the case, he was told that the paper was not known,—

"Why, it is incredible," he would say, "that any respectable place should not take in such a popular journal!"

And he quitted the premises in disdain, never perceiving that in many places, where this bagman's dodge was well known, he was noticed only to be laughed at.

On the evening of the day when that first number was brought out, Brigitte had a large crowd in her rooms, though it was not a Sunday. She had made up her quarrel with la Peyrade, whom her brother had brought in to dinner, and she declared that, flattery quite apart, she thought his first article "wonderfully well hit off." And indeed every visitor declared that the public was delighted with this first number.

The public—everybody known what that means. To a man who has launched any sort of work in print, the public is composed of five or six intimate acquaintances, who, short of quarreling with the author, cannot escape making some comment on his lucubrations.

"For my part," cried Colleville, "I may say that it is the first political article I ever read which did not send me to sleep."

"Certainly," observed Phellion, "the article strikes me as stamped with vigor, combined with such a classic style as we should seek in vain in the ordinary run of public prints."

"Yes," said Dutocq, "it is very well formulated; and there is a turn, a character, in the expression that is by no means common or commonplace. But we shall see how it wears. To-morrow I expect to find that the *Écho de la Bièvre* is furiously attacked by all the other papers."

"But that is all we ask," said Thuillier, "and if only the Government would do us the favor to be down upon us!"

"Thank you," said Fleury, who had also been brought in to dinner by the proprietor; "but I would just as soon not be called upon to play my part quite so soon."

"Oh, down on you!" said Dutocq. "No, you will not be seized or stopped; but I fancy the Ministerial papers will fire a heavy broadside."

Thuillier was at the office by eight o'clock next morning, to be the first to meet this formidable fire. After looking through every paper, he discovered that there was no more notice taken of the *Écho de la Bièvre* than if it had not existed. When la Peyrade came in, he found his luckless friend in despair.

"Are you surprised?" said the lawyer coolly. "I left you yesterday to enjoy your anticipations of a hot engagement with the press; but, for my part, I knew full well that not a word would be said about us. Is not every paper that begins with some brilliancy always met for the first fortnight, or even for a month, with a conspiracy of silence?"

"A conspiracy of silence!" echoed Thuillier admiringly.

He had no idea of what it meant, but in the mere words there was something grandiose, which appealed to the imagination. When la Peyrade had explained that, by a conspiracy of silence, he meant a deliberate system on the part of the established journals of taking no notice whatever of those newly born, so as to avoid advertising them by their comments, Thuillier was hardly more satisfied than he had been in the first instance by the sounding magniloquence of the words themselves. That is the way with the middle-class mind; words are a coinage which pass current without examination. It is fired or soothed by a word, indignant or enraptured. The citizen may be led by a watchword to raise a revolution and overthrow the government he has chosen.

The paper, however, was but a means to an end; the end was Thuillier's election. It was hinted at, rather than urged, in the early numbers; but one morning in the columns of the *Écho* a letter appeared from certain of the voters, thanking their nominee of the Municipal Council for the firm and genuinely liberal attitude he had maintained in the management of certain common interests. "This firmness," said the communication, "had brought upon him persecution by a government which, following in tow of foreign powers, had sacrificed Poland and sold itself to England. The *arrondissement* now looked for a man to represent it in the Chamber, who, having well-tested convictions, would carry aloft the standard of opposition to the ruling dynasty, and so, by the mere omen of his name, become a standing warning to the existing power."

This letter, cleverly commented on by la Peyrade, was signed with the names of Barbet and Métivier, both tenants in the old house in the Rue Saint-Dominique, the second,

ndeed, supplying the paper on which the *Écho* was printed; and with those of most of the tradespeople that Brigitte dealt with, having still given them her custom since removing from the quarter, with an eye to the election; the doctor, the druggist, and the architect had also added their names, and finally Barniol, Phellion's son-in-law, who held advanced opinions. As to Phellon himself, he had thought it far too mild, and ever "without fear and without reproach," though he feared lest his refusal might damage his son's love-affairs, he had bravely abstained from signing the letter.

This tentative flight had the happiest results; the ten or twelve men, who had thus put their names forward, were supposed to express the general wish of the voters of the constituency, and were called "the voice of the electors," and thus Thuillier's cause at once made such a leap forward that Minard hesitated to put forward his rival claims.

Brigitte, enchanted at the turn things were taking, was the first to say that the marriage question must now be settled, and Thuillier was quite of her mind, since he dreaded lest at any moment he might be called upon to pay up the money for which he was security.

The old maid and the lawyer thrashed the matter out. She did not conceal her fears as to the endurance of her sovereign authority, when a son-in-law of such spirit and mastery should be settled in the house.

"And, if we are to disagree," said she in conclusion, "we had far better have separate establishments from the first; we shall be none the worse friends for that."

La Peyrade declared that he would never for all the world agree to such an arrangement. On the contrary, he regarded the perfect security he should enjoy as to the management of his domestic affairs, under the supreme direction of Brigitte, as one of the most important features of the happiness that awaited him. He would have enough on his hands in the management of business matters, and could not imagine how she could suppose that he would want to interfere in concerns in which he was entirely incompetent. In short, he so effect-

ually reasoned and persuaded Brigitte, that she pledged herself to take immediate steps for having the banns published, and to make it her business to announce an early termination of the affair to Céleste, who she said would consent without demur.

"My dear child," said she to Céleste, one morning, "I suppose you have quite given up the idea of marrying Félix Phellion. In the first place, he is more an atheist than ever, and you yourself have noticed that his head was turned. You have met Madame Marmus, at Madame Minard's, the wife of a *savant,* an officer of the Legion of Honor; indeed, a member of the Institute. There is no more wretched woman on earth; her husband buries her behind the Luxembourg, close to the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, in the Rue Duguay-Trouin, a street that is neither paved nor lighted. When he goes out, he does not know which way he is walking, and finds himself at the Champ de Mars, when he meant to go to the Boulevard Poissonnière. He is incapable even of giving his address to a cab-driver, and so absent-minded that he cannot tell you whether he has had his dinner or no. You may fancy what life is to the wives of these men, who always have their spectacles on their nose to gaze at the stars."

"But Félix is not so absent-minded as that," said Céleste.

"Of course not, because he is younger; but with years his absence of mind will increase with his atheism. So we are all of one mind, child, that he is not a suitable husband for you, and your mother and father and Thuillier and I—every one in the house who has any common sense—we have all decided that you are to make up your mind in favor of la Peyrade, a man of the world who will make his way, who has done us great service, and who is now going to get your godfather into the Chamber. We are prepared to settle on you, in his favor, such a sum as we should certainly not give you for any other man. So consider it settled. The banns will be published, and this day week we will sign the contract. We shall give a grand dinner for your relations and intimate

friends, with an evening party afterwards, when the papers will be signed, and your trousseau and presents will be shown; and as I am taking it in hand, you may depend on it things will be done in style, especially if you do not behave like a baby, but fall in with our ideas."

"But, Aunt Brigitte——" said Céleste timidly.

"There are no *buts* nor *ifs* to the matter," said the old maid peremptorily; "the whole thing is settled, and unless you think yourself wiser than your betters, mademoiselle——"

"I will do as you wish, aunt," said Céleste, who felt a cloud about to burst over her head, and knew she was not strong enough to struggle against the iron will that had pronounced sentence on her.

So she went off to pour her sorrows into her godmother, Madame Thuillier's bosom; and hearing herself counseled to be patient and resigned, the poor child saw that here again she would find no support in the smallest attempt at resistance, so she made up her mind that the sacrifice was an accomplished fact.

Brigitte, throwing herself with frenzied zeal into the new sphere of occupation thus brought into her life, at once set to work to get the trousseau made, and dresses and accessories bought. Like all misers, who on great occasions shed their habits, and seem to change their very natures, the old maid thought nothing good enough, and flung her money about so freely that until the day named for signing the contract, the jeweler, the dressmaker, the seamstress, the milliner, the upholsterer,—all from the most noted shops,—almost lived in the house.

"It is like a procession," said Joséphine the cook, lost in admiration, to Françoise from the Minards'; "from morning till night the bell is on the go."

The dinner was ordered in from Chabot and Potel, not from Chevet. Brigitte thus set the seal to her original genius, and her emancipation from the beaten track of Madame de Godollo.

The party consisted of three Thuilliers, three Collevilles,

including the bride-elect, la Peyrade, Dutocq, and Fleury, the responsible manager of the *Écho de la Bièvre,* whom he had asked to witness for him, the very small number of his acquaintance allowing him no choice; Minard and Rabourdin, the witnesses on Céleste's part; Madame and Mademoiselle Minard, and Minard junior; two of Thuillier's colleagues in the Town Council; Dupuis, the notary, who was to draw up the settlements, and finally the Abbé Gondrin, the spiritual director of both Madame Thuillier and Céleste, who was to pronounce the nuptial benediction.

This last-mentioned member of the chosen party had formerly been priest of the church of Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas; his elegant manners and talent for preaching had led to his being transferred by the Archbishop from the very poor parish to which he had first been appointed to the fashionable church of the Madeleine. Since these two ladies had again become his parishioners, the young Abbé occasionally called on them, and Thuillier, who had gone in person to explain to him in his own way the suitability of his choice of la Peyrade, while taking care to abuse young Phellion's religious opinions, had easily persuaded him to use his unctuous and persuasive eloquence to secure the victim's submission.

Just as they were about to sit down three guests were missing: the two Minards, father and son, and the notary Dupuis. The notary had, indeed, sent Thuillier a line in the morning to beg that he would not expect him to dinner; that at nine precisely he would join the party, bringing the papers with him, and be at Mademoiselle Thuillier's orders.

Madame Minard apologized for her son by saying that he was confined to his room by a bad sore throat; as to the elder Minard, who did not accompany his wife and daughter, his absence remained unexplained, and Madame Minard, while assuring them that he would certainly come, insisted on their sitting down without him. Brigitte gave orders that the soup should be kept hot for him; for, among the middle classes, a dinner without soup is not a dinner at all.

The meal was not particularly cheerful; and so far as

animation of talk was concerned, though the fare was better, what a difference between this dinner and the famous impromptu banquet before the election to the Town Council!

The absence of three of the company was an initial chill; then Flavie was in low spirits, she had had an interview with la Peyrade in her own house, and their explanation had been drowned in tears. Céleste, even if she had been happy in the choice made for her, could not with propriety have shown much joy on the surface, and she made no effort to look happy, not daring even to glance at her godmother, whose face looked like one long woful bleat, so to speak; the poor child felt that if they only exchanged a look, the tears must rise to her eyes. Thuillier was puffed up with importance, so he was stiff and pompous; Brigitte, quite out of the groove in which she was accustomed to rule without rivalry, was equally awkward and uncomfortable.

Colleville, indeed, by a few facetious remarks tried to raise the temperature of the meeting, but the rough flavor of his pleasantries, in the atmosphere on which he tried to float them, had the effect of cackling laughter in a sick room, and a mute hint to "behave," given at the same time by Thuillier, la Peyrade, and Flavie, put a damper on his high spirits and turbulent festivity.

Oddly enough it was the gravest dignitary of the party who, seconded by Rabourdin, succeeded in warming the air. The Abbé Gondrin, a man of refined and cultivated mind, had, like all pure and well-regulated souls, a fund of gentle cheerfulness which he could make contagious, and some degree of animation was beginning to be perceptible when Minard came in.

After making his apologies on the ground of some business at the Mairie that had to be settled before he could get away, he shot a significant look at his wife, which seemed rather to suggest that some private affair had detained him. La Peyrade and Thuillier, having received an order for a box for the famous fairy drama in which Olympe Cardinal was to appear that evening—*Le Télégraphe d'Amour*—were not altogether

convinced of Julien Minard's illness. They, on their part, exchanged meaning looks as they observed the elder Minards' mutual intelligence, and they seemed to be wondering whether the young gentleman's secret were out, and if the task of assuring himself of his son's misconduct were not the business that had detained Monsieur le Maire so late.

Being fairly practised in the art of picking up the thread of the conversation where he found it, and feeling, no doubt, that he must conceal his anxieties under the semblance of perfect freedom of mind,—

"Well, gentlemen," said Minard, as soon as he had hastily swallowed a few mouthfuls, "have you heard the great news?"

"What is that?" asked one and another with eager interest.

"An extraordinary discovery was communicated to the Academy of Sciences at their meeting to-day; there is another star in the sky."

"You don't say so," said Colleville. "Then it will take the place of the star that Béranger missed from its place when he lamented Chateaubriand's departure, to the air of a song from *Octavie:*

"Chateaubriand, why leave your native shore?"

Colleville sang the quotation, and this so exasperated Flavie that if it were the custom for a wife to sit next her husband at table, the retired musician would not have been let off with the stern and imperative: "Colleville!" by which he was called to order from the other end.

"The thing which gives this great astronomical event a peculiar interest for the party I have the honor of addressing," Minard went on, "is that the discoverer is a resident in the twelfth arrondissement, where many of you lived, or are still living. And, indeed, every detail of this great scientific achievement is remarkable. The Academy, merely from reading the paper which announces it, is so entirely convinced of the existence of this new star that when they rose, a deputation proceeded to the residence of this modern Galileo to congratulate him in the name of their Body; and

yet the star is invisible to the eye, even through a telescope; it is by pure calculation and reasoning that its existence and its place in the heavens are proved beyond all dispute. 'There must be an unknown star in that spot; I cannot see it, but I am certain.' This is what the discoverer said at the Academy after convincing them by mathematics. And now, gentlemen, who do you think is the Christopher Columbus of this new world? A purblind old man, who can but just see enough to guide himself in the streets."

"How splendid! How wonderful!" they all exclaimed.

"And what is his name?" asked several persons.

"Monsieur Picot, or, if you prefer it, *Père Picot,* for that is the style he is known by in the Rue du Val-de-Grâce, where he lives. He is neither more nor less than an old professor of mathematics, who has turned out some very first-rate pupils. Félix Phellion, indeed, whom we all know, studied under him; and it was he who just now read the paper before the Academy on behalf of his old master."

On hearing the name of Félix, and remembering the promise in the sky, of which he had spoken, and which she had believed to be sheer insanity, Céleste looked at Madame Thuillier, and her godmother's face had brightened up, seeming to convey to her:

"Courage, my child; all is not yet lost."

"My dear boy," said Thuillier to la Peyrade, "Félix is to be here this evening. You must get hold of him and persuade him to let us have that paper. It would be a stroke of fortune for the *Écho* if only we could get it to publish first."

"Yes, indeed," said Minard, volunteering a reply. "It would be catering handsomely for the curiosity of the public, for the discovery will make an immense sensation. The deputation, not having found Monsieur Picot at home, went on at once to the Minister for Public Instruction; the Minister flew immediately to the Tuileries, and this evening's *Messager,* which came out unusually early this afternoon, so that I read it as I was driving here in my carriage, announces that Monsieur Picot is made chevalier of the Legion of Honor,

with a pension of eighteen hundred francs out of the fund for the encouragement of science and literature."

"Well done!" cried Thuillier, "there, at any rate, is a Cross well bestowed!"

"But eighteen hundred francs a year," said Dutocq, "strikes me as very mean."

"It certainly is," said Thuillier, "when you remember that the money is paid out of the taxes, and we constantly see it wasted on a nobody recommended by the *Camarilla*."

"Oh, eighteen hundred francs is something, after all," replied Minard, "especially for a savant. Those people have hardly any wants, and are accustomed to live on very little."

"I rather fancy," said la Peyrade, "that good Monsieur Picot's life is not very well cared for; for at this very time, his family, who first tried to get a commission in lunacy, are appealing for trustees to be appointed. He is being robbed, they assert, by a housekeeper who lives with him. By the way, Thuillier, you know the woman; it was she who came to the office, the other day, and who had been led to believe that our notary, Dupuis, in whose hands she had some savings, had gone off with the money."

"Yes, yes, of course," said Thuillier in a significant tone. "Yes, I know the woman."

"It is a queer thing," said Brigitte, seizing the opportunity for emphasizing the argument which she had derived a few days since from the absence of mind of Marmus, the Academician, "all these learned men, outside their own science, are no good at all, and in their own home have to be minded like children."

"That," said the Abbé Gondrin, "shows how entirely they are absorbed by their studies, and at the same time reveals an artless nature which really has a touching side to it."

"When they are not as wilful as donkeys," said Brigitte tartly. "All I can tell you, Monsieur l'Abbe, is that if I had ever thought of marrying, a learned man would not have served my turn. In the first place, what is it they work at, I ask you? Stupid nonsense, for the most part. For here you are

all lost in admiration at the discovery of a star; but what the better will any one of us be for that? As to more stars, I cannot see but what there are plenty already."

"Bravo, Brigitte!" cried Colleville, forgetting himself again. "Right you are, my girl; and, like you, I think that a man who discovered a new dish would deserve better of mankind."

"Really, Colleville," said Flavie, "I must say your eccentric remarks are in the very worst taste."

"Dear mademoiselle," said the Abbé to Brigitte, "you might indeed be right if we were constituted solely of matter, and if there were not bound up with our body a soul, whose instincts and cravings need to be satisfied. For my part, I think that the sense of the infinitude which dwells within us, and to which each one strives to respond in his own way, is admirably suited to apprehend the labors of astronomy, which reveal to us new worlds scattered throughout space by the hand of the Creator.

"In you that instinct of the infinite finds another outlet. It looks nearer home; and your passion for the happiness of those about you, your ardent and devoted affection for your admirable brother, are no less manifestations of eager aspirations which are not earth-born, and which, while seeking their end, never pause to ask: 'Of what use is this or that; what good will it do us?' However, I may tell you that the stars are not so utterly useless as you seem to suppose; but for them mariners would sometimes be sorely puzzled how to steer, and could not go to distant lands to fetch the vanilla, with which you have flavored this delicious cream that I am now eating. So, Monsieur Colleville will perceive that there is a closer connection than he fancies between the stars and good dishes. None are to be disdained—neither astronomers nor good housewives——"

The abbé was interrupted by the noise of a violent altercation in the anteroom.

"I tell you, I will go in!" cried a voice.

"No, monsieur, you shall not go in," answered the voice of

the man-servant. "They are at dinner, sir, I tell you, and you cannot force your way into a private house in that style."

Thuillier turned pale; since the seizure of his pamphlet he scented the police in every unexpected visit.

Among other rules impressed on Brigitte by Madame de Godollo, one which had needed most constant repetition, was that she should never leave the table over which she was presiding as the mistress of the house till she gave the signal for a general move. But the circumstances being her excuse,—

"I will go to see what is the matter," she said quickly to Thuillier, seeing how uneasy he seemed. "What is it?" she asked the servant, as soon as she reached the scene of the struggle.

"A gentleman who says he will come in; that no one is still at dinner at eight o'clock."

"But who are you, monsieur?" said she to an old man, strangely dressed, with a green shade over his eyes.

"Madame, I am neither a beggar nor a vagabond," replied the old man in a loud voice. "My name is Picot. I am a professor of mathematics——"

"Of the Rue du Val-de-Grâce?" Brigitte put in.

"Yes, madame, No. 9, next the fruit shop."

"But come in, monsieur, come in; we are only too proud to see you," cried Thuillier, who, hearing his visitor's name, had rushed out to welcome him.

"He has dropped like his own star from the sky," said Colleville.

"Well, you rascal," said the old man, turning to where the servant had been standing, though he had disappeared on finding that all was amicably settled, "I told you I would go in!"

Père Picot was a tall man, with a severe, angular face, stamped with a truculent and surly expression, in spite of the mitigating effect of a fair wig, dressed in a thick roll, and the subduing shade over his eyes; and his large features were overcast with sickly pallor from unremitting study. He had given proof of his irascible temper before entering the dining-room, where everybody rose to receive him.

His dress consisted of a voluminous garment, something between an overcoat and a dressing-gown, under which an enormous iron-gray cloth waistcoat, double-breasted, with two rows of buttons from below his waist up to his throat, formed a sort of breastplate; his trousers, though it was now near the end of October, were of black lasting, and the duller tone of an ill-concealed darn, in contrast to two shining patches, the result of friction about the knees, bore witness to long service; but by daylight the most striking detail of the old man's costume, were his Patagonian feet covered by shoes of felt, which, yielding to the mountainous excrescences of enormous bunions, irresistibly suggested the humps of a dromedary, or an advanced case of elephantiasis.

As soon as he was seated in the chair eagerly placed for him, and when everybody else had resumed their places, in the midst of silence born of curiosity:

"Where is he?" asked the old man in his voice of thunder, "where is the villain, the scoundrel? Let him come forward, let him speak!"

"Who is the object of your wrath?" said Thuillier in a conciliatory tone, that was at the same time slightly patronizing.

"A rascal whom I did not find at home, monsieur, and who is, I was told, in this house. I am, I believe, at Monsieur Thuillier's, member of the Town Council, Place de la Madeleine, on the first floor above the entresol?"

"Quite so, monsieur," replied Thuillier, "and I may add that all here are your respectful admirers."

"And you will allow me, I hope," said Minard, "as the mayor of the contiguous district to that in which you reside, to congratulate myself on finding myself in the presence of Monsieur Picot,—he, no doubt, who has just immortalized his name by the discovery of a star?"

"Yes, monsieur," answered the professor, raising yet higher the pitch of his stentorian voice, "I am Picot—Népomucène, —and the man you mean; but I have discovered no star, I do not meddle with such fads; my eyes are weak, and it is a

ridiculous hoax saddled on me by the insolent rascal I have come here to seek. He is in hiding, the coward, and dares not breathe a word in my presence."

"But who is the man you are so angry with?" several voices asked at once.

"An unnatural disciple," said the terrible old mathematician, "a scoundrel—a clever fellow all the same—the wretch Félix Phellion."

The name was heard with such amazement as may be imagined. Colleville and la Peyrade thought the notion so funny that they shouted with laughter.

"And you dare laugh, you villain!" cried the irate old man, starting to his feet; "just come and laugh where I can get at you."

And brandishing a heavy bamboo cane with a china knob, that he used to guide his steps, he very nearly overthrew a branched candlestick on to Madame Minard's head.

"You are mistaken, monsieur," said Brigitte, seizing his arm in time, "Monsieur Félix Phellion is not here. It is possible that he may come by and by to a little party we are giving, but he has not arrived yet."

"You do not begin your evening parties early," said the old man. "It is past eight o'clock. However, since you expect Monsieur Félix to come presently, I will ask you to allow me to wait for him. You were at dinner, I think; do not disturb yourselves."

And he more calmly sat down again.

"Since you are so kind, monsieur," said Brigitte, "we will go on—or rather finish, for we are at dessert. May I offer you anything? A glass of champagne and a biscuit?"

"With pleasure, madame," said the old man. "No one ever refuses champagne, and I often take a snack between my meals; but you dine very late."

Room was made at the table between Colleville and Mademoiselle Minard, and the musician undertook to keep his neighbor's glass replenished, while a dish of dainty cakes was placed before him.

Then said la Peyrade in wheedling tones,—

"But we are all surprised, monsieur, at your having any cause for complaint of Monsieur Félix Phellion, the mildest and most inoffensive of young men. What, exactly, has he done to raise your indignation to such a pitch?"

The professor, whose mouth was full of pastry, which he was consuming at a rate that alarmed Brigitte, signed that he would answer immediately, and after mistaking his glass, and swallowing the contents of Colleville's:—

"What has he done?" said he. "The wretch! he has played me such tricks as he ought to hang for—and this is not the first. He knows that I loathe the stars, and with reason, to my cost. In 1807, being attached to the Astronomical Survey,* I was one of the scientific expedition sent to Spain under my friend and colleague, Jean-Baptiste Biot, to prolong the line of the meridian from Barcelona to the Balearic Isles. I was in the act of observing a star—the very star, perhaps, that my rascally pupil has just discovered—when suddenly, war having been declared between France and Spain, the peasants, seeing me perched with a telescope at the top of Mount Galazzo, took it into their heads that I was signaling to the enemy. An infuriated mob broke my instruments and talked of cutting my throat. I should have been done for but for a ship's captain who took me prisoner, and lodged me in the citadel of Belver, where I spent three years in cruel captivity.

"Since then, as you may suppose, I have washed my hands of the stellar system. It was I, nevertheless, who was the first to detect the famous comet of 1811; but I should never have said a word about it if it had not been for Monsieur Flauguergues, who was so silly as to publish the fact. Now Phellion, like all my pupils, knows how I hate the stars, and he knew that the dirtiest trick he could play me was to saddle one on me, and I can tell you the deputation who came to go through the farce of congratulating me was very lucky not to find me at home, for the respected Academicians, in spite of

* Bureau des longitudes.

their Academy, would have spent a very uncomfortable half-hour."

The old mathematician's queer monomania struck the company as exceedingly droll. Only la Peyrade, who was beginning to understand the part played by Félix, was annoyed that the explanation should have been insisted on.

"Still, Monsieur Picot," said Minard, "if Félix has committed no other crime than giving you the credit of his own discovery, it seems to me that there was some compensation for his misbehavior—the Cross of the Legion of Honor, a pension, and the fame that will accrue to you."

"The Cross and the pension I will take," said the old man, emptying his glass, which he then set down on the table with such violence as to break the stem, to Brigitte's great horror. "The Government has owed them to me these twenty years; not for discovering stars,—I always scorned the article,—but for my famous treatise on Differential Logarithms, which Kepler chose to call monologarithms, and which forms a sequel to Napier's Tables; for my *Postulatum* of Euclid, which I was the first to solve; and above all, for my *Theory of Perpetual Motion,* four octavo volumes, with plates: Paris, 1825. As you perceive, monsieur, to offer me fame is pouring water into the sea. I so little needed Monsieur Phellion's services to secure me a scientific position that I turned him out of my house in disgrace, a long time ago."

"Then this is not the first star he has dared to foist on you?" asked Colleville flippantly.

"He has done worse than that," cried the old man; "he has ruined my reputation and tarnished my fame. My *Theory of Perpetual Motion,* which it cost me a perfect fortune to print, when it ought to have been done at the King's printing-press, might have made me rich and immortalized my name. Well, that miserable Félix hindered it all. Every now and then, pretending to be acquainted with my publisher: 'Your book is selling very well, Père Picot,' the young imposter would say: 'here are five hundred francs,' or fifty crowns—sometimes even a thousand francs—'which the publisher gave

me to pay to you.' This game went on for years, and the publisher, who was mean enough to join in the conspiracy, would say to me, as I went past his shop: 'Aye, aye, we are not doing badly; things are humming; we shall get through the first edition.' And I, suspecting nothing, would pocket the money and say to myself: 'My book is liked; by degrees the idea will make its way, and I may expect any day to see some great capitalist come and propose to apply my system——'"

"Of absorbing liquids?" asked Colleville, who was constantly occupied in filling the old lunatic's glass.

"No, monsieur, of perpetual motion, four octavo volumes, with plates: Paris, 1825. But the days slipped by and nobody ever came; so, fancying that my publisher was not as energetic as might be wished, I wanted to make terms for the second edition with another publisher. Then it was, monsieur, that the plot was discovered, and I had to turn the viper out of doors. In six years just nine copies had been sold. I, lulled in false security, had done nothing to push my book, which was said to have 'gone off' without assistance, and thus, the victim of the blackest jealousy and malice, I was unjustly robbed of the reward of my labors."

"But surely," said Minard, speaking the thoughts of everybody present, "might we not rather regard it as an equally ingenious and delicate manner——"

"Of doing me a charity, you mean?" interrupted the old man, in a roar that made Mademoiselle Minard jump in her chair; "of humiliating me, disgracing me—me, his old master! And do I need the doles of charity? I, Picot—Népomucène,—whose wife brought me a fortune of a hundred thousand francs, have I ever begged of anybody? But in these days nothing commands respect; an old fellow, as they call us, is pumped as to his beliefs, and cheated of his good faith, that some one may be able to say: 'You see these doting old fools are no good at all; we, the younger generation, the modern men, young France, must step in and bring 'em up by hand.' You, a beardless boy, you—support me? Why, we doting

fools have more learning in our little finger than you have in your whole body, and you will never be a match for us, miserable plotters that you are! However, I am sure to be avenged. That young Phellion is bound to come to a bad end. What he did to-day, reading a report in my name before a full meeting of the Academy, is neither more nor less than forgery, and the law sends forgers to the galleys."

"True enough," said Colleville, "it is the forgery of a star that is common property."

Brigitte, who was quaking for her glasses, and whose nerves were quite upset by the old man's capacity for cakes and wine, rose as a signal for the adjournment to the drawing-room. She had several times heard the bell ring, announcing that some of the company bidden to the evening party had already arrived. First, they had to move the old professor, and Colleville civilly offered him his arm.

"No, monsieur," said Picot; "allow me, I beg, to stay where I am. I am not dressed for an evening party, and a bright light fatigues my eyes. Also, I have no fancy for being stared at, and the explanation between me and my pupil had better take place in a *tête-à-tête.*"

"Well, then, leave him alone," said Brigitte to Colleville. And nobody pressed the old man, who, without knowing it, had almost stripped himself to all claims to reverence. Before leaving the room, however, the thrifty mistress saw that nothing breakable was left within his reach; and then, as a parting civility, she asked him whether she should send him some coffee.

"I take it, madame, and a glass of brandy," replied Picot.

"Good heavens! he takes everything," said Brigitte to the man-servant, as she left the room, and she warned him to keep an eye on the old maniac.

As Brigitte went into the drawing-room she perceived that the Abbé Gondrin was the centre of a large circle of almost every one in the room, and joining the group, she heard him saying:—

"I thank Heaven for having granted me such happiness.

I have never felt anything more deeply than the scene we have just gone through, and even the somewhat burlesque character of the revelation, which was on the whole artless, too, for it was quite involuntary, contributed to glorify the astonishing act of generosity it betrayed. Placed as I am by my sacred calling in the way of seeing many charitable actions, as the agent or witness of many a good deed, I may declare that I never in my life met with a case of such touching and ingenious generosity. Let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth, is a precept of Christianity; but to go so far as to sacrifice fame to make a chariot for another man, under such strange circumstances, with every risk of being told he lied, of being misunderstood and repulsed—that is worthy of the very apostle of benevolence! How gladly would I know the young man and clasp hands with him!"

Céleste, with her hand through her godmother's arm, was standing near the priest. Her ears drank in his words, and as he was talking in praise of Félix's conduct, she clung more closely to Madame Thuillier's arm, saying in a whisper:

"You hear, godmamma, you hear."

To crush the impression which this heartfelt praise could not fail to make on Céleste, Thuillier spoke:

"Unfortunately, Monsieur l'Abbé," said he, "the young man of whom you are telling such fine tales is not altogether a stranger to you. I have, before now, had occasion to speak of him to you, regretting that it was impossible to carry out certain plans we had thought of for him, by reason of his very compromising attitude with regard to religious matters."

"Oh! Is this the same young man?" said the Abbé. "You surprise me greatly, and I must confess I should never have thought that the two could be one."

"Dear me, Monsieur l'Abbé," said la Peyrade, taking up the matter, "you will see him here in a few minutes, and by leading him to the discussion of certain questions, you will have no difficulty in sounding the depths of deterioration which the pride of learning can effect in the most nobly tempered souls."

"I shall not see him," said the Abbé; "for my black gown would be out of place in the midst of the fashionable splendor that is gradually filling the room. But as I know, Monsieur de la Peyrade, that you are a man of sincere religious convictions, and no doubt take as great an interest in this young man's soul as I do myself, I will say, before leaving, that you may be quite easy. Sooner or later these noble spirits all come home to us, and though we may have long to wait for the return of the wanderers ere we see them brought to God, I should never despair of His infinite mercy towards them."

Having thus spoken, the Abbé proceeded to look for his hat, intending to make his escape.

Just as he fancied he could steal away unperceived, he was accosted by Minard.

"Allow me, monsieur," said the Mayor, "to press your hand, and thank you for the words of tolerance that have fallen from your lips. Ah! If all priests were like you, how victorious might religion be! At this moment I am in domestic trouble, and must decide on a line of conduct on which I should be very glad to have your opinion, and the guidance of your superior wisdom."

"Whenever you please," replied the Abbé. "Rue de la Madeleine, No. 8, behind the Cité Berryer. After early mass, at six in the morning, I am generally at home all the forenoon."

As soon as the priest had left, Minard led his wife aside.

"It is all true," said he, "the anonymous letter did not mislead us. Master Julien is, in fact, keeping an actress from Bobino's, and it was to be present at her first appearance at the Folies-Dramatiques that he gave it out that he was ill this evening. The porter's wife, of the house where the damsel resides, is on very bad terms with the mother, who was a fish-hawker, they say, and for a five-franc piece she told me the whole story, chapter and verse. When I go in this evening, I will have a serious explanation with that young gentleman, my son."

"My dear," said Madame Minard, with theatrical emphasis, "I implore you come to no hasty resolutions."

"Gently," said Minard, "everybody can see us. As to resolutions, I have made none; I have, indeed, just asked the Abbé Gondrin to give me the benefit of his advice, for we may scout the priests, no doubt, so long as all goes well, but when adversity overtakes us——"

"But, indeed, my dear, you are taking the matter too seriously; young men will be young."

"Yes," said Minard, "but there are some things which I can never overlook. A respectable youth in the clutches of such women! It means dishonor and ruin to his family. You, Zélie, cannot know what these actresses are—Phryne, Laïs, and of the most dangerous species. If a man is of the respectable classes, that is enough to give them a particular pleasure in ruining him. They declare that all our money earned in trade is simply stolen, that we make it by adulteration and trickery, and they empty our pockets to make us disgorge, as they say. How unlucky that I cannot now lay my hand on Madame de Godollo, such a clever woman of the world! She would have been the very person to advise us."

Suddenly a terrific hubbub brought this matrimonial aside to a close. Brigitte flew into the dining-room, whence there came a clatter of falling furniture and crashing glass, and there she found Colleville trying to reconstruct his tie and examining his coat to assure himself that, though it had been shockingly dragged at the collar, the effects of violence had not gone so far as a rent.

"What can be the matter?" asked Brigitte.

"That old lunatic," said Colleville, "flew into a fury. I came to drink my coffee here to keep him company; he chose to take offence at a little joke and flew into such a passion that he seized me by the collar, and in the struggle he threw over two or three chairs, and a tray of glasses that Joséphine was carrying, as she could not get out of the way fast enough."

"It is all because you nagged him," said Brigitte crossly;

"why couldn't you stay in the drawing-room instead of coming in here to poke fun, as you call it! You always think you are in the orchestra at the Opéra Comique."

With this tart speech, Brigitte advanced with a resolute air, seeing that she must positively get rid of this old savage who threatened her house with fire and sword; she went up to Père Picot, who was now quietly amusing himself with burning brandy in a saucer.

"Monsieur," said she, at the top of her voice as if she were speaking to a deaf man—she fancied a purblind man needed the same treatment,—"I may tell you something that won't best please you. Monsieur and Madame Phellion are now here, and they tell me that Monsieur Félix is not coming." And adopting the explanation that had served Julien Minard: "He has a sore throat," she added, "and an attack of hoarseness."

"Which he got by reading his paper," cried the professor delighted. "Serve him right! Madame, where do you buy your brandy?"

"At my grocer's," said Brigitte, surprised by the question.

"Well, madame, it is my duty to inform you that in a house where the champagne is excellent, reminding me of what I used to swig at the table of the Master of the University, the late Monsieur de Fontanes, it is a disgrace to produce such brandy as that. I tell you, with the frankness on which I always pride myself, it is just good enough to bathe your horses' feet with. If it had not occurred to me to burn it——"

"Why, he is the devil in person," thought Brigitte; "there is no excuse whatever for the mischief he has done, and now to play tricks with my brandy! Monsieur," said she, in the same loud tone, "as Monsieur Félix will not be here, don't you think that your family may be uneasy at your long absence?"

"Family, madame! I do not own such a thing since they tried to prove me a lunatic; however, there is my housekeeper, Madame Lambert, who must, indeed, be astonished at not

seeing me at home before this, and I am quite ready and willing to return to her; for the later I am, the more violently shall I be scolded. But I must confess that in this out of the way part of Paris I might have some difficulty in finding my way."

"Well, then, you must take a coach."

"A coach to come, and a coach to go home again! My kind relations will for once have a right to talk of my extravagance."

"As it happens I have an important message to send to your neighborhood," said Brigitte, who saw she must bear the expense. "I was going to send my porter in a cab—if you would take advantage of the lift?"

"I accept your offer, madame," said the old man rising; "and in case of need you can certify that you have known me to be stingy over the cost of a hackney-cab."

"Henri," said Brigitte to the man-servant, "take this gentleman down to Monsieur Pascal, at the porter's lodge; and tell him that before doing the commission I gave him just now, he is to drop him at his own door, and take great care of him."

"Great care, great care!" repeated the old man, refusing the man's arm. "Do you take me for a parcel, madame, a piece of damaged china?"

Seeing her man safe at the door, Brigitte allowed herself to speak her mind.

"What I said was for your good, sir," said she. "And you will allow me to remark that your temper is none of the best."

"Great care!" the old man repeated. "But are not you aware, madame, that these are the sort of words that lead to a commission in lunacy? However, I will not be too rude in return for the kind hospitality you have shown me—all the less because I flatter myself that as for the gentleman who seemed to lack respect for me, I taught him his place."

"Get along, do, old brute," said Brigitte, as she shut the door behind him.

And before returning to the drawing-room, she was obliged to drink a whole tumblerful of water; the effort she had made to get rid of this obstreperous guest had, as she said, "given her quite a turn."

On the following morning, the elder Minard was shown in to Phellion's study. The great citizen and his son Félix were discussing some matter which seemed to be of absorbing interest.

"My dear Félix," exclaimed the Mayor of the eleventh arrondissement, as he heartily shook hands with the younger man, "it is you who have brought me here this morning. I have come to offer you my congratulations."

"Why, what has happened?" asked the father. "Have the Thuilliers at last——"

"The Thuilliers! What have they to do with it," interrupted Minard. "But do you mean to say that this rogue has concealed even from you——"

"I do not imagine," said the great citizen, "that my son has ever concealed anything from me."

"Then you knew of the sublime astronomical discovery which he communicated yesterday to the Academy of Sciences?"

"Your kindly feeling for me, Monsieur le Maire," said Félix hastily, "has misled you. I was only the reader, not the writer, of the paper."

"Stuff and nonsense," said Minard; "only the reader! Everything is known."

"But look," said Félix, handing the *Constitutionnel* to Minard. "Here is the newspaper; it not only states that Monsieur Picot is the discoverer, but it mentions the rewards bestowed on him by the State without an hour's delay."

"Félix is right," said Phellion. "The paper bears him out; and I am of opinion that on this occasion the Government has behaved very creditably."

"But, my dear friend, I can but repeat that the cat is out of the bag, and your son is all the more admirable. A man

who gives his old teacher the credit of such a discovery in order to secure to him the favors of the State—I know of no finer action in all antiquity."

"Félix," cried his father with some emotion, "the endless labors to which you have lately devoted yourself—your constant visits to the Observatory——"

"No, no, father; Monsieur Minard is misinformed."

"Misinformed!" echoed Minard, "when I had the whole story from Monsieur Picot himself."

This proof, stated in such a way as to leave no shadow of doubt, convinced Phellion of the truth.

"Félix, my son!" he exclaimed, rising to embrace his son.

But he was obliged to sit down again; his legs refused to support him, he turned pale, and this usually solid nature seemed ready to succumb under the shock of such sudden happiness.

"Good God!" cried Félix, "he is ill—pray ring the bell, Monsieur Minard."

And he hastily rushed up to the old man, whose necktie and collar he at once unfastened, and slapped his hands briskly. But the weakness was over in a moment; Phellion was soon himself again, and clasping his son to his heart, he held him in a long embrace, saying, in a voice broken by the tears that came to the relief of this acute happiness:

"Félix, my noble son! As great in heart as in mind."

Minard meanwhile had rung the bell with such magisterial decision that all the house was roused.

"It is nothing—nothing," said Phellion, as he dismissed the servants.

But at the next moment, seeing his wife come in, he resumed his usual pomposity.

"Madame Phellion," said he, pointing to Félix, "how many years is it since you brought this young man into the world?"

Madame Phellion, puzzled by the question, hesitated for a moment and then answered:

"Twenty-five years next January."

"And don't you think," continued her husband, "that up

to the present time God has granted your maternal prayers by bestowing on you for your offspring an honest man, a dutiful son, gifted, too, with no mean aptitude for mathematics—the queen of sciences?"

"Certainly," said Madame Phellion, understanding less and less what her husband was driving at.

"Well, then," said he, "you now owe to Heaven an additional act of thanksgiving, for God has made you the mother of a man of genius; the studies which we have abused, and which led us to fear for our beloved son's reason, have been the steep and rugged path by which he has climbed to glory."

"Well, well!" exclaimed Madame Phellion. "Do you think you will at last be able to explain yourself?"

"Your son," said Minard, a little more cautious now in administering the joy he could give, for fear of causing a fresh crisis of happiness, "has just made an astronomical discovery of great importance."

"Really, truly?" said Madame Phellion, turning to her son, and taking his hands with a loving look.

"And when I say important," Minard went on, "I am only trying to break the matter gently to your motherly feelings. It is a sublime, a bewildering discovery. He is not yet five-and-twenty, and his name will be immortal."

"And this is the man," said Madame Phellion, hugging her son with effusive joy, "to whom they can prefer la Peyrade!"

"They do not prefer him, madame," said Minard; "for the Thuilliers are not the dupes of that intriguing rascal: he forces himself on them. Thuillier fancies he cannot be elected without his help; but he has not got his seat yet, and everything is to be sacrificed to gain that."

"But is it not atrocious," said Madame Phellion, "to make one's ambitions ride rough-shod over one's child's happiness?"

"Ah!" said Minard, "Céleste is not their child; she is only an adopted daughter."

"So far as Brigitte is concerned, true," said Madame Phellion. "But as to 'handsome' Thuillier——"

"My dear," said Phellion, "let us have no bitterness. God has just given us a great happiness. And besides, that marriage—about which I am sorry to say that Félix does not show such philosophy as I could wish—may not take place after all."

Félix shook his head despondently.

"Very true," said Minard, "my friend is right. Last evening, when the contract was to be signed, there was a hitch. You were none of you there, to be sure; your absence was remarked on."

"We were invited," said Phellion, "and till the last moment we hesitated as to whether we should go. But as you understand, we should have been in a false position. And Félix was quite overdone with excitement and fatigue, which I can now quite understand, as he had been reading his paper to the Academy. It would have been very awkward to go without him, and we, therefore, took the wise man's course and stayed at home."

Not even the presence of the man whom he had just proclaimed to be immortal could hinder Minard from seizing the opportunity as soon as it offered for rushing on one of the delights which is most prized by the middle classes; that, namely, of reporting and discussing gossip.

"Only think," said he, "the most extraordinary series of incidents occurred last night at the Thuilliers', each stranger than the last." And he first related the curious episode of Père Picot's visit.

Then he repeated the warm approval of Félix's conduct pronounced by the Abbé Gondrin, and the young priest's wish to make Phellion's acquaintance.

"I will go and call on him," said Félix; "do you know where he lives?"

"No. 8 Rue de la Madeleine," replied Minard. "I have this minute left him. I had a rather delicate case to discuss with him, and his advice was as charitable as it was shrewd.

—But the great event of the evening was that a large and well-dressed party had met to hear the marriage contract read, and the notary, after keeping us waiting for more than an hour, never came at all."

"So that the papers were not signed?" said Félix anxiously.

"Not even seen, my dear boy. All on a sudden the news was brought that the notary had set out for Brussels."

"On more pressing business, no doubt," said Phellion innocently.

"Most pressing, indeed," replied Minard. "A little bankruptcy for five hundred thousand francs is what the gentleman bolted from."

"But who can the man be who, as a public official, can fail so grossly in the sacred duties of his calling?" asked Phellion.

"No one but your neighbor in the Rue Saint-Jacques, the notary Dupuis."

"What!" exclaimed Madame Phellion, "such a pious man, church-warden of the parish?"

"Indeed, madame," said Minard; "it is those very men who go the pace; it has been known before now."

"But," remarked Phellion, "such news falling into the middle of a family party must have come like a thunderclap."

"All the more so," answered Minard, "because it was brought in the strangest and most unexpected manner."

"Tell us all about it," said Madame Phellion quite eagerly.

"Well, it would seem," Minard went on, "that this pious swindler had in his hands the savings of a great many domestic servants, and that Master la Peyrade—for all those saints, you see, form a clique—made it his business to pick up clients for him from among that class."

"I always said that the Provençal was a very bad sort," interrupted Madame Phellion.

"And just lately he had sent to our notary the savings of an old housekeeper, a hypocrite of the same kidney, a nice little sum indeed which was worth taking care of—twenty-five

thousand francs, if you please. This good woman, by name Madame Lambert——"

"Madame Lambert!" exclaimed Félix, "why, she is Monsieur Picot's housekeeper: a close cap, a pale, thin face, no hair visible, and never looks up when she speaks?"

"The very woman, a canting creature," said Minard.

"And she has saved twenty-five thousand francs!" said Félix. "I do not wonder that Père Picot was always pinched."

"And that he had to look sharply after the sale of his book," said Minard slyly. "At any rate, as you may suppose, when this woman heard of the notary's flight, she was in a fine pucker. Off she trotted at once to la Peyrade's house; there she was told that la Peyrade was dining at the Thuilliers'; but she did not get their new address right, so, after running about the whole evening, at about ten o'clock, when we had all been standing in that drawing-room for hours, as it seemed, looking blankly at each other, and not knowing what to do or what to say, for neither Brigitte nor Thuillier was equal to redeeming such an awkward situation, and we had neither Madame de Godollo's voice nor Madame Phellion's delightful talent to charm us——"

"You are too polite, Monsieur le Maire," said Madame Phellion, smiling primly.

"In short, at about ten o'clock, this woman Lambert found her way to the Town Councillor's apartment, and asked to see the lawyer."

"Quite natural," said Phellion; "as the agent for the investment the woman had a perfect right to call on him to account for it."

"Well, you will see the Tartuffe," Minard went on. "He had hardly left the room when he came back again with the news. As we were all longing to be released, there was a general exodus. Then what did our man do? He went back to Madame Lambert, whom he had left in the ante-room, and as the worthy dame never ceased crying out that she was ruined, that she was done for,—which may perhaps have been spon-

taneous, but was quite as likely to be a scene got up with la Peyrade,— in the presence of all the company on which this servant intruded her clamor: 'Be quite easy, my good woman,' says monsieur the editor of the *Écho de la Bièvre*, 'you were a party to the investment, so that, in fact, I owe you nothing; but the money having passed through my hands, my conscience holds me responsible; if the assignees in bankruptcy do not pay you in full, I will pay.'"

"Well," said Phellion, "it was my opinion from the first that the agent was responsible. I should not have hesitated to do as Monsieur la Peyrade has done, and I do not think he can be taxed with Jesuitry for that."

"Yes, you would have done it," said Minard, "and so would I. But we should not have done it to the sound of trumpets; and, besides, we should have paid out of our own pockets, like gentlemen. But this electioneering broker— where is he to find the money? Out of the settlements?"

At this moment the boy came in and handed a letter to Félix Phellion. It was from Père Picot, written at his dictation by Madame Lambert; for this reason the original spelling is not given here.

Madame Lambert's writing was such as, once seen, can never be forgotten. Félix, recognizing it, at once said: "It is from the old professor," and before opening it he added: "You will allow me, Monsieur le Maire?"

"He will give it you smartly," said Minard. "In my life I never saw anything so comical as his rage last evening."

As he read the epistle, Félix smiled. When he came to the end, he handed it to his father.

"You can read it aloud," said he.

Then in his solemn tones the great citizen began:—

"My dear Félix: I have just received your note. It came in the very nick of time, for I was what you may call pretty mad with you. You say that in committing the abuse of confidence of which you have been guilty, and about which I intended to give you a pretty sharp scolding, you meant to

deal a black-hander to my family by showing them that a man who could make the elaborate calculations required for the discovery you have made, was not a man to be treated as a lunatic, or to have his affairs administered by others. This argument is satisfactory, and is so far a reply to their infamous proceedings that I commend you for having thought of it. But you have made me pay pretty dear for your argument, by making me the philosopher and friend of a star which you very well knew I would never have had anything to do with.

"At my time of life a man who has discovered perpetual motion, does not trouble his head with such fantastic rubbish. It is all very well for gabies and beginners like you; and that is what I took the liberty of saying this morning to the Minister of Public Instruction, who received me indeed with the greatest civility. I put it to him that, having mistaken his man, he ought, perhaps, to take back his Cross and his premium, though I have certainly earned them in other ways.

" 'The Government,' answered he, 'is not in the habit of making mistakes. What it does is always well done, and a patent signed by his Majesty cannot be annulled. Very good work has won the favors bestowed on you by the King; it is, indeed, a long-standing debt that I am happy to be able to pay, in his name.'

" 'But how about Félix?' said I. 'For after all, for a youngster, this discovery is none so bad.'

" 'Monsieur Félix Phellion,' replied he, 'will in the course of the day receive his appointment to be Chevalier of the Legion of Honor; the patent will be signed by the King this morning. And I may add that there happens to be a chair vacant in the Academy of Sciences, and unless you claim it——"

" 'I in the Academy!' cried I, with the frankness you know so well, 'I execrate your Academies. They are wet blankets —gatherings of idlers—shops with a fine sign and nothing to sell——'

" 'Well, then,' said the Minister, smiling, 'I fancy that

Monsieur Félix has every chance in his favor at the next election, to say nothing of Government influence, which will be on his side so far as its legitimate exercise will allow.'

"So this, my poor boy, is all I could do to reward you for your good intentions, and show you that I owe you no grudge. I fancy, in fact, that the 'family' will pull rather long faces. Come and talk it all over to-day at four o'clock; for I do not dine as I saw a party dining yesterday, in a house where, by the way, I heard you very handsomely spoken of.

"Madame Lambert, who is a better hand with the pan than with the pen, will do her best, and though it is a Friday —you know she never lets me off—she promises me a dinner for an archbishop, though Lenten fare, washed down with a half-bottle of champagne, aye, and a second if need be, to hansel our red ribbon.

"Your old master and friend,
"PICOT, *Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.*

"P.S. If you could persuade your mother to entrust to you a little bottle of that excellent old Cognac, of which you once gave me a sample? I have not a drop left, and I tasted some last night just fit to bathe a horse's feet; but I did not mince matters with the fair Hebe who gave it me."

"Certainly, he shall have some more," said Madame Phellion, "and not a small bottle, but a large one."

"And I have some," added Minard, "not so bad, I can tell you, of which I could send him a few bottles. But do not tell him where it comes from, Monsieur le Chevalier,—you will accept me as your sponsor, I hope,—for it is impossible to guess how that extraordinary man will take a thing."

"Wife," said Phellion suddenly, "give me a white tie and my black coat."

"Where are you off to?" asked Madame Phellion. "To the Minister, to return thanks?"

"Bring my things, I say. I have an important call to make, and Monsieur le Maire I know will excuse me."

"Oh, I am going too," replied Minard, "for I have some business to attend to concerning my son. He has not discovered a star, I promise you."

Vainly cross-questioned by his wife and son, Phellion dressed, put on a pair of white gloves, sent for a hackney cab, and, a quarter of an hour later, was announced to Brigitte, whom he discovered busy putting away the best china and plate that had been in use the day before.

Ceasing her homely occupation to receive her visitor:

"Well, Papa Phellion," said the old maid, when they were seated, "you gave us the slip last night. However, you showed that you had a sharper nose than the rest. Do you know what a trick the notary played us?"

"I know all about it," said Phellion, "and the unexpected reprieve in the execution of your plans, to which the incident has given rise, is the text, I may say, of an important discussion I want to have with you. Providence occasionally seems to find pleasure in thwarting our best-contrived schemes; sometimes, again, by the obstacles it places in our way it seems to signify to us that we have taken the wrong turning, and warns us to think better of it."

"Providence!" said Brigitte the strong-minded, "Providence! It has other things to do without troubling about us."

"That is a matter of opinion," said Phellion. "For my part, I am apt to see its hand in small things as in great; and this much is certain: if, last evening, Providence had allowed your promises to Monsieur de la Peyrade to be carried into effect, you would not at this moment see me here."

"So you think," retorted Brigitte, "that for want of a notary a marriage must fall through. But for want of a monk the abbey does not stand idle, the proverb says."

"My dear lady," said Phellion, "you will do me the justice to admit that neither I nor my wife ever tried to influence

your decisions. We allowed the young people to fall in love without too carefully considering to what the attachment might lead——"

"To making them dissatisfied," said Brigitte. "That is what love leads to, and that is why I have never allowed myself to indulge in it."

"What you say applies very truly to my unhappy son," answered Phellion; "for in spite of the lofty occupations by which he has tried to divert his thoughts, he is even now so overcome by his sorrow that only this morning, notwithstanding the splendid success he has just achieved, he was talking to me of making a voyage round the world, an expedition which would absent him from home for at least three years, if, indeed, he should escape the perils of so long a journey."

"Why, really," said Brigitte, "that is not such a bad idea, perhaps; he might come back consoled, and discover three or four more stars."

"One is enough for us," said Phellion, with twice his usual solemnity. "And it is under the auspicies of this discovery, which has lifted his name to so high a place in the world of science, that I am so fatuous, mademoiselle, as to tell you point-blank I have come to ask the hand of Mademoiselle Céleste Colleville for my son Félix Phellion, who loves her, and whom she loves."

"But, my good man, you are too late," said Brigitte. "Consider, we are *diametrically* pledged to la Peyrade."

"It is never too late to do right, they say, and yesterday would have been too soon for me to dare to come forward. My son would not have then said, by way of compensation for their disparity of wealth, 'If Céleste, by your liberality, has a fortune with which mine cannot pretend to compare, I have the honor to be a member of the Royal Order of the Legion of Honor, and ere long, to all appearance, I shall be a member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, one of the five departments of the Institute.'"

"No doubt," said Brigitte, "Félix promises to be a very

good match; but we are pledged to la Peyrade. His name is put up with Céleste's at the Mairie; but for a quite extraordinary incident, the contract would have been signed; he is working for Thuillier's election, which is already looking well; we have invested money in his interest in a newspaper; in short, even if we wished it, we could not possibly release ourselves from our promise."

"And so," said Phellion, "in one of those rare cases in which reason and inclination point the same way, you think it well to make both yield to the question of interest? Céleste, as we all know, has no particular liking for Monsieur de la Peyrade. Brought up with Félix——"

"Brought up with Félix!" interrupted Brigitte; "she had her choice once between Monsieur de la Peyrade and your son, so that is all the violence we have done her; and she would have nothing to say to Monsieur Félix, whose atheism is well known."

"There you are mistaken, mademoiselle; my son is not an atheist, and Voltaire himself doubted whether there could be an atheist. No later than yesterday, in this very house, an ecclesiastic as noted for his talents as for his virtues, while speaking of Félix in the handsomest terms of praise, expressed a wish to make his acquaintance."

"Yes, to convert him!" retorted Brigitte. "But as to the marriage, I am sorry to say you are a day after the fair. Thuillier will never give up his la Peyrade."

"Mademoiselle," said Phellion rising, "I do not feel in the very least humiliated by the useless step I have taken; I do not even ask you to keep it a secret, for I shall be the first to talk of it to all our friends and acquaintance."

"Talk away, my good man, to whomsoever you will," replied Brigitte bitterly. "Next thing, I suppose, because your son has discovered a star,—if he did discover it, and not the old fellow who has got all the rewards from Government,—he must marry one of the daughters of the King of the French."

"We will say no more," said Phellion. "But I might

answer that, without wishing to depreciate the Thuilliers, the Orleans family are perhaps somewhat their superiors. However, I do not wish to bring any unpleasant feeling into the conversation, so begging you to accept the assurance of my humble respect, I will take leave to withdraw."

This said, he made a majestic exit, leaving Brigitte in a fit of ferocious temper under the sting of his final reflection, shot *in extremis* like a Parthian arrow. She was all the more furious because already, the evening before, Madame Thuillier, after the company had left, had been so impossibly daring as to speak a few words in favor of Félix. The poor soul had, of course, been roughly snubbed, and told to mind her own business; but this effort at independence, on the part of her sister-in-law, had provoked the old maid, and Phellion, by reopening the question, could not fail to exasperate her.

On Joséphine and the man-servant fell the storm resulting from this scene. During Brigitte's absence everything had been done wrong, so she herself "turned to," and at the risk of breaking her neck clambered on to a chair to reach the topmost shelves of the cupboard where her best china was carefully kept under lock and key.

This day, which had begun so badly for Brigitte, was undoubtedly one of the busiest and stormiest of all this history.

To relate its events in detail, we must go back to the hour of six in the morning, and find Madame Thuillier on her way to the Madeleine to hear mass which the Abbé Gondrin always celebrated at that time, and then to take the sacrament, a viaticum with which no pious soul fails to fortify itself when it has some great enterprise in view.

Then, at eight o'clock, we see the elder Minard calling on the young priest, as he had been told he might, and confiding to the learned and conciliatory casuist the story of his paternal woes.

The Abbé Gondrin mildly blamed him for training his son to a profession in which, while bearing an official title

which seems to imply a life of hard work, idleness tempts a youth to every folly; advocates without briefs, and doctors without patients are, when impecunious, a nursery ground for the ranks of revolution and mischief; or, when they are rich, they ape the youthful aristocracy, which, bereft of all its privileges but the *dolce far niente,* devotes almost all the leisure of an idle and useless existence to training horses for the turf and women for the stage.

In this particular instance, the strong proceedings which the mayor of the eleventh arrondissement seemed desirous of taking were purely chimerical. There is no Saint-Lazare now for the accommodation of misbehaving youth, and Manon Lescauts are no longer kidnapped for America. The Abbé was, therefore, of opinion that the father should make some pecuniary sacrifice: the siren must be paid off and married; thus morality would triumph in two ways at once. As to acting as go-betweens for this arrangement, the young priest was by no means eager; he was, in fact, too young to meddle in such affairs, where scandal is so ready to steal in side by side with the credit for meaning well. As the girl had a mother, Minard might send for the woman and treat with her.

At about noon the Abbé Gondrin had a visit from Madame Thuillier and Céleste. The poor child pined for some further explanation of the words in which, last evening, in Brigitte's drawing-room, the eloquent speaker had answered for the salvation of Félix Phellion. For, to the theological damsel, it had seemed strange, indeed, that a man who had never "practised religion" could be admitted to mercy by Divine Justice—and, in fact, the anathema is explicit: "Outside the church there is no salvation."

"My dear child," said the Abbé Gondrin, "you must get a better understanding of this apparently inexorable dictum. It is spoken to the glorification of those who are so happy as to dwell within the pale of our holy Church, rather than as a final curse on such as are so unhappy as to be outside of it. God sees all hearts and knows His chosen few; and the

treasures of His loving kindness are so infinite that it has been given to none to gauge their depth and abundance. Who can dare to say to God the Omnipotent: Thus far shalt thou be forgiving and generous? Jesus Christ pardoned the woman taken in adultery, and even on the Cross He promised Paradise to the repentant thief, to show us that His wisdom and mercy shall be supreme, and not the judgments of men. Such an one, believing himself to be a Christian, may be an idolater in the sight of God; and such another is regarded as a heathen, who is, without knowing it, a true Christian. As I said last evening to Monsieur de le Peyrade, a pure spirit is always won over in the end; we have only to give it time; it is a trust which brings in large interest, and, besides, charity enjoins it."

"Good heavens!" cried Céleste, "to hear this too late, when I, who had my choice beween Monsieur Félix and Monsieur de la Peyrade, dared not follow the dictates of my heart! —Oh, Monsieur l'Abbé, could not you speak to my mother? Every one listens to you."

"Quite impossible, my child; if I were Madame Colleville's director I might, perhaps, make the attempt; but we are too constantly accused of meddling rashly in family concerns. Believe me, my intervention, having no authority and no weight, would do you more harm than good. You yourself, and those who love you,"—and he glanced at Madame Thuillier,—"must consider whether the arrangements, rather far advanced it must be owned, cannot be modified to meet your wishes."

It was written that the poor girl should drain to the dregs the cup she had brewed in her intolerance. As the priest ceased speaking, his old housekeeper came to ask if he could receive Monsieur Félix Phellion. And so, like the Charter of 1830, Madame de Godollo's official fib was coming true.

"You can go out this way," said the Abbé, hastily leading the ladies to a back passage.

Life has such strange turns, that now and again the same evasion may serve the purpose of a courtesan or a saint.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said Félix, as soon as he and the priest were alone together, "I have heard of the large-hearted way in which you were good enough to speak of me at Monsieur Thuillier's, and I should, in any case, have hastened here to thank you; but another matter also brings me to call."

The Abbé hurried over the formalities to ask of what service he might be.

"With intentions which I believe to be charitable," replied the young professor, "you were troubled yesterday with some remarks as to the state of my soul. Those who are so intimate with it know more than I do about my inmost self, for within these last few days I have been aware of some new and inexplicable promptings. I have never denied God; but, face to face with the infinitude whither He has permitted my mind to soar in search of one of His creations, I feel as though I had gained a less confused, a more immediate sense of His Being, and have wondered whether, indeed, His omniscience requires of me nothing more than an honest and upright life. Still, objections without number rise up in my soul to the form of worship of which you are a priest; and though I am fully sensible of the beauty of its forms, my reason rebels against many of its injunctions and rules. My indifference and delay, in seeking relief from these doubts, have cost me very dear—my whole life's happiness, perhaps. But I am now determined to sift the matter to the bottom. No one better than you, Monsieur l'Abbé, can settle my doubts. I come in all confidence to submit them to you, to beseech you to listen to me, to answer me, to tell me in what books I may pursue my search for light, and at what hours you may be so kind as to devote yourself to conversing with me. The soul that appeals to you is sorely burdened. Is not that a fitting preparation for receiving the good seed of your words?"

The Abbé expressed the joy with which, notwithstanding his poor ability, he would endeavor to answer the young philosopher's conscientious scruples, and after begging Félix to regard him as a friend, he advised him first to study the *Pensées* of Pascal. A natural affinity in their talent for

geometry ought, the priest believed, to exist between Pascal's mind and his.

While this little scene was proceeding, a scene which derived a certain dignity from the high interests at stake, and the lofty moral and intellectual standpoint of the two speakers, more easily understood than reproduced—as is the case with everything calm and reposeful,—bitter discord, the chronic disease of middle-class households where narrow-minded and concentrated passions constantly open a door to it, was raging in Thuillier's house.

Brigitte, standing on a chair, her hair in disorder, her face and hands covered with dust, and wielding a feather brush, was sweeping one of the shelves of the cupboard, where she was replacing her library of plates, dishes, and sauce-boats, when Flavie came in.

"Brigitte," said she, "as soon as you have done you will be wise to come and call on us, or I can send Céleste over to you; it strikes me she is going to give us some of her nonsense."

"How is that?" said Brigitte, not interrupting her dusting.

"Well, I fancy that she and Madame Thuillier went together this morning to the Abbé Gondrin, for up she comes and gives me a rigmarole about Félix Phellion, speaking of him as if he were a god; and from that to throwing over la Peyrade, as you may suppose, is but a step."

"Those confounded black-caps!" exclaimed Brigitte. "They must have a finger in every pie. Well, I never wanted him invited; it was you who insisted on it."

"It was only common decency," said Flavie.

"Much I care for the proprieties!" retorted the old maid. "A long-winded speechifier, who only put his foot in it. Well, send Céleste to me; I will talk to her, I promise you——"

Just then the servant announced the managing clerk of the notary, who, for lack of Dupuis, was to draw up the marriage contract.

Heedless of her untidy appearance, Brigitte said he was to be shown in; however, she was so far civil as not to talk to him from the elevation at which she was perched.

"Monsieur Thuillier," said the lawyer's clerk, "looked in at our office this morning to explain the terms of the settlement he was good enough to place in my chief's hands. But it is our practice, before setting out the clauses of a marriage contract, to request the parties providing the moneys to vouch personally for their generous intentions. Monsieur Thuillier announced that he proposed to settle on the bride the reversion of the house he inhabits—this no doubt——"

"Yes," said Brigitte, "that is his intention. I settle on her three thousand francs a year in the three per cents, to be absolutely hers; everything is settled for her sole use and benefit."

"Quite correct," said the lawyer, consulting his notes; "Mademoiselle Brigitte Thuillier, three thousand francs per annum. Now, there is Madame Céleste Thuillier, wife of Louis Jérôme Thuillier, who likewise on her part settles a sum in the three per cents, yielding six thousand francs a year, in immediate possession, and six thousand more in reversion."

"That," said Brigitte, "is as safe as if the notary had seen it; however, if it is your way of doing things, you can, if you wish it, be shown in to my sister."

And she desired the servant to conduct the gentleman to Madame Thuillier's room.

A moment after, the clerk returning, announced that there would seem to be some mistake, for Madame Thuillier declared that she would make no settlement whatever in the marriage contract.

"That is pretty stiff!" cried Brigitte. "Come with me, monsieur."

And she rushed like a tornado into Madame Thuillier's room. The poor woman was pale and trembling.

"What is this you have been saying?—that you will give nothing towards Céleste's fortune?"

"Yes," said Madame Thuillier in frank rebellion, but in a quavering voice; "I intend to give her nothing."

"But these intentions of yours," said Brigitte, purple with rage, "are something quite new."

"They are my intentions," was all the mutineer would say.

"At any rate, you will tell us why?"

"I do not like the marriage."

"Indeed! And since when?"

"It is useless," said Madame Thuillier, "to detain this gentleman while we discuss it; our explanations will have no place in the settlements."

"You may well be ashamed of yourself," said Brigitte, "for you are not showing yourself in a favorable light. It is easier to erase a clause in the contract than to add one, I believe, monsieur," she said to the clerk.

He bowed assent.

"Then draw it up as at first designed; if Madame Thuillier insists, we can strike out the annulled clause."

The lawyer bowed and went away.

When the sisters-in-law were left together, Brigitte broke out:

"Have you lost your wits, may I ask?" said she. "What is this freak of temper that has come over you?"

"It is not temper; it is a firm determination."

"For which you have paid your Abbé Gondrin! Will you dare tell me that you have not just come from him, with Céleste?"

"Quite true, Céleste and I went this morning to see our director. But I did not say one word to him as to my intentions."

"Indeed! and so it was in that little empty head of yours that this cracker was concocted?"

"Yes. As I told you yesterday, I consider that Céleste may find a more suitable match, and I am resolved not to impoverish myself in favor of a marriage I do not approve."

"That you do not approve! What next? Bless me, we are to ask my lady's leave and opinion!"

"I know," said Madame Thuillier, "that I have always been nobody in the house. And so far as I am concerned, I long since made up my mind to it; but when the happiness is at stake of a child I look upon as my own——"

"The deuce is in it. You never were clever enough to have one; for certainly Thuillier——"

"Sister," said Madame Thuillier with some dignity. "I took the communion this morning, and there are things which I cannot really hear said."

"That is the way with all you precious sacrament-eaters!" cried Brigitte. "Butter will not melt in your mouth, and yet you turn a home topsy-turvy! And do you suppose the matter will end just so? Thuillier will be in before long, and he will give you a piece of his mind."

By thus appealing to the marital authority in support of her own, Brigitte betrayed her weakness and amazement at the deep and unexpected blow thus dealt at her immemorial rule. Her sister-in-law's calm tone, every moment more determined, altogether upset her; she fell back on abuse.

"A sluggard!" she shrieked. "A lazy thing, incapable of even picking up her pocket-handkerchief—and she wants to be mistress of the house!"

"I so little want to be mistress here that last night I allowed myself to be silenced after merely trying to speak two words. But I am mistress of my property, and as I believe that Céleste will some day be a very miserable woman, I shall keep it to use at the right time and opportunity."

"Good dog!" said Brigitte sarcastically. "*Her* property! What next?"

"Certainly, the money I had from my father and mother, and brought in settlement to Thuillier."

"And who was it that turned that money to account, and made it bring you in twelve thousand francs a year?"

"I have never asked you to account for a penny of it," said Madame Thuillier mildly. "If it had all been lost in the affairs you chose to invest in, you would never have heard me utter one word of complaint; but it has turned out well, and it is only fair that I should get the benefit. And, after all, I am not saving it for myself."

"That is as may be. If these are the airs you give yourself, it is none so certain that we shall long go in at the same door."

"And do you imagine that Monsieur Thuillier will turn me out? He would have to give some reasons, and, thank God! as a wife he has never had a fault to find with me."

"Viper! Hypocrite! Heartless wretch!" cried Brigitte, having exhausted her arguments.

"Sister," said Madame Thuillier, "you are in my room."

"Get out of it then, you lazy baggage!" screamed the old maid, gasping with rage. "If I only let myself go——" and her gesture was at once an insult and a threat.

Madame Thuillier rose to leave the room.

"No, you don't!" cried Brigitte, pushing her down again into her chair; "and till Thuillier has said what is to be done, you stay locked in here."

When Brigitte, with a flaming face, reappeared in the room where she had left Madame Colleville, she found her brother, whose arrival she had predicted. Thuillier was beaming.

"My dear," said he to the harridan, not observing the state she was in, "everything is going on swimmingly; the conspiracy of silence is at an end. Two papers—the *National* and a Carlist sheet—have reprinted two of our articles this morning, and there is a short attack in one of the ministerial papers."

"Well, things are not going on swimmingly here," retorted Brigitte; "and if they go on like this, I shall simply leave the place."

"Who has offended you?" asked Thuillier.

"Your insolent idiot of a wife, who has just favored me with a scene—— I am shaking all over still."

"Céleste! A scene?" said Thuillier. "Why, it is the first time in her life then."

"Everything must have a beginning, and if you do not take a high hand——"

"But what was this scene about?"

"Oh, my lady objects to la Peyrade as her goddaughter's husband, and out of spite at not being able to hinder the marriage, she declares she will settle nothing on her."

"Come, come, compose yourself," said Thuillier quite coolly,

the recognition of the *Écho* as a polemical combatant making him a second Pangloss. "I will settle it all."

"You, Flavie," said Brigitte, as Thuillier went off to his wife's room, "will you have the goodness to go home and tell Mademoiselle Céleste—whom I will not see just now, for, really, if she provoked me, I should be capable of slapping her—tell her, I say, that I do not like conspiracies; that she was left free to choose Monsieur Phellion junior, and she would have nothing to say to him; that everything is settled in accordance with that, and that if she does not wish to find herself reduced to the fortune you can give her—a pittance that a banker's clerk could carry easily in his waistcoat pocket——"

"Really, my dear Brigitte," Flavie put in, turning restive under such impertinence, "you need not taunt us so severely with our poverty; after all, we have never asked you for anything; we pay our rent regularly; and, short of all this, Monsiour Félix Phellion would gladly take Céleste with the fortune that a banker's clerk might carry in a bag."

And she emphasized the last word.

"Oho! so you, too, are in the plot!" cried Brigitte. "Well, go and fetch your Félix. I know, my fine madame, that you have never much fancied this match. It is precious dull to be no more than your son-in-law's mother-in-law."

But Flavie had recovered the presence of mind that for a moment had deserted her. She only replied with a shrug.

By this time Thuillier returned; his beatific expression had disappeared.

"My dear Brigitte," said he, "you have the best heart in the world; but you can at times be so violent——"

"Heyday!" cried his sister. "Then I am to be called to account, it would seem."

"Of course I have nothing serious to bring against you, and I have rated Céleste well for her presumption; but decency must be respected."

"What nonsense are you talking with your 'decency'? What, pray, is the 'decency' in which I have failed?"

"Well, my dear, to lift your hand against your sister."

"I lift my hand against that simpleton? Well, that is a good one."

"And, besides," Thuillier went on, "a woman of Céleste's age is not to be put in prison."

"Your wife—and I put her in prison?"

"You cannot deny it, for I found her door double-locked outside."

"By heaven! because, in my anger at the abuse she rained on me, I turned the key, I suppose, without knowing it."

"Come, come," said Thuillier, "this is not the way for respectable people like us to behave."

"Indeed! So now I am in the wrong, I suppose? Very well, my boy. You will live to remember this day, and we shall see how your house is managed when I have nothing to do with it."

"You will always have something to do with it," said Thuillier. "Housekeeping is the breath of life to you, and you will be the first to suffer."

"That's what we shall see," retorted Brigitte. "After twenty years of slavery to be treated like the scum of the earth!"

And flinging herself out of the room, slamming the door violently behind her, the old maid departed.

Thuillier was not in the least disturbed by this exit.

"Were you present, Flavie, when this scene took place?"

"No; they were in Céleste's room. So she was rather rough with her?"

"Just as I said, lifted her hand to hit her and then locked her in like a child. Céleste may be sleepy and stupid, still there are limits that must not be overstepped."

"Our worthy Brigitte is not always easy to get on with," said Flavie. "We had a little skirmish, too, she and I."

"Ah, well," said Thuillier, "it will all settle down again. As I was saying, my dear Flavie, we have had the greatest success this morning. The *National* copies two whole para-

graphs of an article of which, as it happens, I wrote several sentences——"

And here again Thuillier was interrupted in the story of his political and literary good luck.

"Monsieur," said Joséphine the cook, coming into the room, "could you tell me where the key of the large trunk is?"

"What for?" asked Thuillier.

"For mademoiselle; she wants it in her room."

"What does she want it for?"

"Mademoiselle is going away, I suppose, sir. She has taken all her clothes out of the drawers, and she is folding up her gowns to pack them."

"Some fresh folly!" said Thuillier. "Go, Flavie, and see what mad trick she is planning."

"Not if I know it," said Madame Colleville. "You had better go yourself; in her present frame of mind she is quite capable of beating me."

"It was my gaby of a wife," cried Thuillier, "who started this wild nonsense about the settlements. She really must have been very provoking to drive Brigitte to such extremities."

"You have not told me where the key is, sir," said Joséphine again.

"I know nothing about it," said Thuillier angrily. "Look for it, or tell her it is lost."

"I should think so, indeed," said Joséphine. "Catch me telling her that."

At this moment the door-bell rang.

"I daresay that is la Peyrade," said Thuillier with some satisfaction. And, in fact, the Provençal was admitted.

"It was high time you should be here, I can tell you, my dear fellow," said Thuillier; "for the house is in a state of revolution, and all on your account. You, with your golden tongue, must try to restore order and peace."

He explained to the lawyer the cause and circumstances of the civil war that had broken out.

"Under existing circumstances," said Théodose to Madame Colleville, "I may, I suppose, without impropriety be allowed a few minutes' private conversation with Mademoiselle Céleste?"

Here again la Peyrade showed his usual acumen; he saw at once that, to effect the pacification he was asked to negotiate, Céleste was at the heart of the situation.

"I will send for her," said Flavie, "and we will leave you alone together."

"My dear Thuillier," said la Peyrade, "I will beg you quite quietly and very briefly to tell Mademoiselle Céleste that you require her to express her consent, so as to make her think that she was sent for for that purpose. After that you may leave us, and I will manage the rest."

So the servant was sent down to Madame Colleville's room in the entresol, to tell Céleste that her godfather wished to speak to her.

The sort of pantry, where the scenes here related had begun in the midst of Brigitte's household cares, was not suitable for the interview requested by Théodose, so while waiting for Céleste they adjourned to the drawing-room.

As soon as she came in, Thuillier began, in agreement with the programme as arranged.

"My dear child," said he, "your mother has been telling me things which much surprise me. Is it the fact that though your contract was to have been signed last evening, you have not yet made up your mind to the marriage we have arranged for you?"

"Indeed, godfather," said Céleste, startled by this sudden cross-examination, "I do not think I said that to mamma."

"But were you not just now speaking of Monsieur Félix Phellion in terms of extravagant praise?" said Flavie.

"I said no more than everybody is saying."

"Come," said Thuillier, in an authoritative tone, "we will take no equivocation. Do you or do you not refuse to marry Monsieur de la Peyrade?"

"Dear fellow," said the Provençal, intervening, "you have

a rough and crude way of putting such questions, which especially before me seems not quite appropriate to the occasion. As I am the party principally interested, will you allow me to have a few words with Mademoiselle Céleste—an explanation which may perhaps be necessary? Madame Colleville will not refuse me this favor; in the position in which I stand my request, I think, cannot alarm her motherly caution."

"I would agree at once to your wishes," said Flavie; "but that all this ceremony seems to suggest a doubt as to what is irrevocably settled."

"Nay, my dear madame, it is my earnest wish that Mademoiselle Céleste should remain till the last moment perfectly free to change her mind. So I will beg you to decree my request, as we say."

"So be it," said Madame Colleville. "You think yourself very clever; but if you allow that child to get the better of you, so much the worse for you. Are you coming, Thuillier, since we are in the way?"

As soon as the two young people were left to themselves, la Peyrade placed an easy-chair for Céleste, and sat down himself, and then he said:—

"You will, I venture to believe, mademoiselle, do me the justice to allow that I have not hitherto wearied you with too much expression of feeling. I have known alike the impulse of your heart and the repugnance of your conscience. I hoped in time, by keeping in the background, to creep in between the two opposing currents; but at the stage we have now reached, I do not think I am indiscreet or over-hasty in begging you to tell me definitely what is your final decision?"

"Indeed, monsieur," said Céleste, "since you speak so kindly and frankly, I will tell you honestly what you know already, that having been brought up in intimacy with Monsieur Félix Phellion, and knowing him so much longer than I have known you, the idea of marriage, always alarming to a girl, seemed to me less terrifying with him than with any other man."

"Well, but at one time," observed Théodose, "you were allowed a choice——"

"Very true, but at that time there were religious difficulties."

"And those are now removed?"

"To a great extent," said Céleste. "I am accustomed to yield my opinions to those who are more enlightened and better informed than I am, and you yourself, monsieur, heard what Monsieur l'Abbé Gondrin said yesterday evening."

"God forbid," said the Provençal, "that I should dare invalidate the decision of so eminent an authority. At the same time I may point out to you that among the clergy themselves there are various shades of opinion: some are thought too severe, others too indulgent. The Abbé Gondrin is more noted as a preacher than as a casuist."

"But Monsieur Félix seems ready to justify our good priest's hopes," said Céleste eagerly; "for I know that he was calling on him this morning."

"Then he certainly must have been to see Father Anselm," said la Peyrade, with some irony. "But even granting that, on the religious side of the question, Monsieur Félix should ere long be prepared to satisfy you fully, have you considered, mademoiselle, the important change that is about to take place in his life?"

"Certainly, I have, and it really does not seem to me a reason for liking him the less."

"No; but it is a reason for his liking himself the more. I am afraid lest, instead of the modesty and humility which are among the great charms of his character, he should assume a self-sufficiency and confidence which, while giving rise to personal assertiveness, might choke or dry up the spring of tender feeling. And besides, mademoiselle, you cannot doubt that a man who has discovered one world will crave to find another. Would you wish the whole firmament to be your rival?"

"You plead your case with much wit," said Céleste, smiling, "and I can fancy you, as a pleader, quite as troublesome a husband as Monsieur Phellion the astronomer."

"Mademoiselle," said la Peyrade, "to speak seriously, I am sure that you have your heart in the right place, and are capable of the most delicate feeling. Well, then, do you know what is happening to Monsieur Phellion? He has lost nothing by his devotion to his old master; his pious fraud is known to all; his discovery is rightly attributed to him, and if I may believe Monsieur Minard, whom I met but just now, he is about to be made Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, and, ere long, a member of the Academy of Sciences. Now, if I were a woman, I should, I own, be distressed if, at the very moment when I was about to take a man into favor, such an avalanche of good things were to come down on him. I should be afraid lest the world should accuse me of worshiping the rising sun."

"Oh, monsieur," exclaimed Céleste warmly, "you cannot imagine me capable of anything so base!"

"I cannot; no," said the Provençal, "I have just expressed the contrary opinion. But the world is so rash, so unjust, and, at the same time, so perverse in its judgments."

Seeing that he had insinuated some anxiety into the girl's mind, for she made no reply, la Peyrade went on.

"Now, to turn to a far more serious aspect of your position, a matter which is not merely personal, and a question, so to speak, between you and yourself, do you know at this moment, in this very house, without intending it, you have been the cause of the most terrible and lamentable scenes?"

"I, monsieur?" said Céleste in surprise, mingled with horror.

"Yes; your godmother's excessive affection for you has transformed her into quite another woman. For the first time in her life she has a will of her own. With that obstinate determination, which is to be accounted for only by long repression of will, she has announced that she will not add anything whatever to the sums to be settled on you, and I need not tell you against whom this unexpected thriftiness is directed."

"But I beg you to believe that I knew nothing whatever of my godmother's intentions."

"I am sure of it; and it would be but a trifling misfortune were it not that Mademoiselle Brigitte chose to take this decision of Madame Thuillier's as a personal offence, having always till now found her yielding and submissive to her dictation. An angry, nay, a violent, explanation ensued. Thuillier, between the hammer and the anvil, could do nothing; on the contrary, he quite involuntarily embittered matters, and they have come to such a point that if you could venture to go to Mademoiselle Thuillier's without exposing yourself to a storm of fury, you would find her packing up to leave the house."

"Monsieur! what are you saying?" cried Céleste in dismay.

"The exact truth, which you may verify by asking the servants, for I feel that my statements are scarcely credible."

"But it is impossible!" cried the poor girl, her agitation increasing at every word spoken by the wily Provençal. "I cannot be the occasion of such disasters."

"That is to say, that you never meant to be; for the mischief is done, and Heaven only grant that it may not be irremediable."

"Good God! but what am I to do?" cried Céleste, wringing her hands.

"Sacrifice yourself, mademoiselle, is what I should reply without hesitation; but that in the present circumstances the part of the victim, at once deplorable and enviable, is allotted to me."

"Indeed, monsieur," said Céleste, "you quite misunderstand the objections I have felt, but scarcely expressed. I had a preference, but I have never regarded myself as a victim; and whatever is necessary to restore peace in the household I have upset, I am ready to do without repugnance, nay, very willingly."

"That," said la Peyrade, with hypocritical humility, "is far beyond what I dare to hope for. Still, to achieve the result we both desire, something more than that is needful, at any rate, on the surface. Madame Thuillier has not asserted

her independence merely to resign it again at once on the announcement of your submission. This, from my lips, is preposterously absurd, but the position demands it; your godmother must be led to believe in a strange want of taste on your part, by your assuming an eagerness in favor of my success, which, however improbable, shall be sufficiently well acted to deceive her."

"Very well," said Céleste, "I can affect to be light-hearted and happy. My godmother, monsieur, is to me a second mother—and what can one not do for a mother?"

The situation was so pathetic, and Céleste so innocently betrayed how great was the sacrifice which she was, however, prepared to carry out, that la Peyrade, if he had had a heart at all, must have been disgusted with his own conduct. But to him Céleste was but a stepping-stone; and if only the ladder will bear and raise a man, who ever thought of expecting it to show enthusiasm? It was settled then that Céleste should go to her godmother, and should assure her of her mistake in supposing that la Peyrade had ever been the object of the girl's aversion. When once Madame Thuillier's opposition was removed, all would be plain sailing: the lawyer undertook to make peace between the sisters-in-law; and, as may be supposed, he was not wanting in words to promise the guileless girl a life in the future when, by unfailing love and devotion, he would spare her all regrets for the necessity under which she had accepted him.

And when Céleste spoke to her godmother, she found less difficulty in convincing her than she had expected. To venture so far in rebellion the poor woman had made an almost superhuman effort of will to overcome her every instinct and natural impulse. At the moment when she heard her beloved goddaughter's false confidences, reaction had set in, and she probably would have been incapable of holding out in the resistance she had begun, for lack of strength. So she was easily deluded by the farce to be played for the benefit of the Provençal.

The storm once lulled on that side, la Peyrade had no

difficulty in explaining to Brigitte that she had gone rather too far in her determination to repress the revolt against her authority; and that authority being no longer disputed, Brigitte forgave her sister-in-law for having so narrowly escaped a slapping; so with a few kind words and a kiss or two, the squabble was made up, Céleste paying the indemnity of the war.

After dinner, a family dinner, for it was impossible to repeat the abortive party of the evening before, the notary—on whom they were to call next day—came to wait on Mademoiselle Thuillier. This important functionary had come to submit the clauses of the contract to the interested parties before making a fair copy. Nor was there anything strange in this proceeding as an attention to so important a personage as Thuillier, since the notary naturally would omit nothing that might secure him as a permanent client.

La Peyrade was much too clever to make any comment whatever on the document that was read in his presence. From certain changes suggested by Brigitte, which gave the Provençal a very high opinion of the old maid's capacity for business, he easily understood that the clauses in restriction of his powers were rather tighter than was altogether polite; but he was determined to raise no difficulties. He well knew that a marriage contract is never so close a net that a clever and determined man cannot slip through it somewhere. The signing was to take place in the notary's office on the following day, at two o'clock, in the presence of the family only.

During part of the evening, taking advantage of the semblance of kindness which he had enjoined on Céleste, and which she did her best to affect, la Peyrade played the poor child, as it were, compelling her, by his ardent assumption of gratitude, to reply with a warmth that was far, indeed, from the true feeling of a heart wholly filled by the image of Félix Phellion.

Flavie, as she saw the Provençal thus laying himself out

to be fascinating, remembered how, not so long ago, he had done the same to entangle her. "The wretch!" said she to herself; but she was forced to put a good face on her martyrdom, and presently a great service, apparently done by la Peyrade to the Thuillier family, set the last seal on his influence and importance.

Minard was announced.

"My dear friends," said he, "I have come to give you a little piece of information—a revelation that will certainly be a surprise to you, and a lesson to us all when we are tempted to admit strangers into our homes."

"What is that?" said Brigitte inquisitively.

"That Hungarian you were so bewitched by, that Madame Torna, Comtesse de Godollo——"

"Well?" said the old maid.

"Well," said Minard, "she was just a good-for-nothing, and for two months you petted and pampered the most impudent courtesan."

"Who crammed you with that nonsense?" said Brigitte, determined not to admit too readily that she could have been so duped.

"No one has crammed me!" retorted the Mayor. "I know the facts myself *de visu.*"

"Bah! Then you keep company with these ladies?" said Brigitte, on the offensive. "A pretty story—if only Zélie could know it."

"It is not he who keeps such company," said Thuillier knowingly; "it is my gentleman, his son; we have heard about him."

"Well, that is the truth," said Minard, thoroughly annoyed by the way his communication was received. "And since that impudent rascal has gone so far as to introduce his trumpery actress to get you to write her up in your paper, I cannot conceal it. Master Julien has chosen to keep an actress from some low theatre, and it was in the society of that creature that I met *your friend,* Madame de Godollo. I have spoken plainly enough, it seems to me, and doubt is no longer possible."

"It may be quite plain to you," replied Brigitte; "but unless you are one of those worthy parents whom their sons introduce to their mistresses, I should be glad to know how you, of all men, found yourself in the company of Monsieur Julien's fair?"

"Indeed!" cried Minard furious. "Then you suppose that I am the man to encourage my son in his profligacy?"

"I suppose nothing," retorted Brigitte; "you yourself said 'I found myself in the company——'"

"I said nothing of the kind," interrupted Minard. "I said that I had seen Madame de Godollo—whose real name is Madame Komorn, and who is no more a countess than you are, or than Madame Colleville—in the company of the worthless creature on whom my son wastes his money and his time. Now, do you wish me to explain the how and the why of the meeting?"

"Why, certainly," said Brigitte, in an incredulous tone, "the explanation is not unnecessary."

"Well, to show you how little I shut my eyes to my son's misconduct, being warned by an anonymous letter, as soon as I heard of his debaucheries I took steps to assure myself of the truth by the evidence of my own eyes; for I know how far an anonymous letter is to be relied on."

"By the way," said Brigitte, by way of parenthesis, and addressing la Peyrade, "it is odd we should never have had any about you."

"If you do not mean to listen," said Minard, nettled at the interruption, "it is quite useless to ask me for details."

"Yes, yes, we are listening," said Brigitte. "You wanted to see with your own eyes."

"Yes," replied Minard, "and on the day of your dinner, when I came in so late, I had been to the Folies-Dramatiques, the scene of Julien's dissipations, where this hussy was to make her appearance. I wanted to make sure whether the young scoundrel, who, saying he was ill, left the house as soon as we were out of it, was in his place to applaud her. It is a dreadful thing to say, but such, in fact, are the false-

hoods to which such a lunatic will stoop when he is bewitched by an actress."

"And was he there?" asked Brigitte, in a tone of small sympathy with the Mayor's woes.

"No, mademoiselle, he was not. I did not see him anywhere in the house; but in a little stir which took place on the stage as the curtain rose, I saw the boy, the disgrace of my old age, talking in the airiest way to a fireman, and so far forward from the side scenes that one of the vulgar audience in the pit called out to him: 'Take your nut out of the way, youngster!' You may imagine the joy to a father's heart at hearing this pleasing admonition."

"You see," said Brigitte, "you have spoiled your dear Julien."

"Far from spoiling him," said Minard; "but for his mother's entreaties I was inclined to handle him pretty smartly. However, having heard, last evening, such words of wisdom and tolerance from the Abbé Gondrin, it occurred to me that I would go and ask his advice, and by his counsel I decided that——"

"As if priests understood anything about such matters!" exclaimed Brigitte scornfully.

"The proof that they do lies in the fact that the plan suggested by Monsieur l'Abbé was perfectly successful. I went to this dangerous woman's mother, I told her that I was prepared to make some sacrifice to put an end to a connection which was, no doubt, as great a grief to her as to me; that I would go so far as to pay her daughter an allowance of fifteen hundred francs a year, or a lump sum of thirty thousand francs as a marriage portion; and I took care to add that there was nothing more to be got out of my son, as I was about to cut off supplies. 'The very thing!' replied the woman. 'There is a copying clerk to the Justice of the Peace for the twelfth arrondissement who has had his eye on Olympe, and who is only too ready to bite.' "

"Did she mention the copying clerk's name?" said la Peyrade.

"I do not think so," answered Minard. "At any rate, I have forgotten it. I settled everything on the nail with the mother, who seemed a very good sort of woman."

"But in all this," remarked Brigitte, "I see no sign of Madame de Godollo."

"Have patience," replied Minard. "'The only thing I am afraid of,' said the old mother, 'is that she may be ill advised by a Polish woman, a Madame *Cramone,* who has got hold of my girl and does what she likes with her; but perhaps if you would see her,—and hinted at some little present for herself,—she might play our game for us. She is here, as it happens; shall I call her in? I will tell her, naming no names, sir, that a gentleman wants to speak to her.' I agreed; the lady was brought in; imagine my astonishment when I found myself face to face with your Madame de Godollo, who, the instant she saw me, turned tail and was off laughing like a crazy thing."

"And are you quite sure it was she?" said Brigitte. "If you only just saw her——"

The wily Provençal was not the man to miss the opportunity thus offered of retaliating on the Hungarian's practical joke.

"Monsieur le Maire was not mistaken," said he decisively.

"What! So you know her too?" said Mademoiselle Thuillier. "And you allowed us to harbor such vermin!"

"Quite the contrary," answered la Peyrade. "It was I who, without any fuss or saying a word to anybody, rid your house of her. You may remember how suddenly she vanished. It was I who, having discovered what she was, gave her two days to clear out in, threatening that, if she hesitated, I should tell you the whole truth."

"My dear fellow," said Thuillier, pressing the lawyer's hand, "you acted with equal prudence and determination. This is yet another debt we owe you."

"You see, mademoiselle," said la Peyrade to Céleste, "how strange a patroness a certain person of your acquaintance had."

"Thank God!" said Madame Thuillier, "Monsieur Félix is above all these vile things."

"Well, well, Papa Minard," said Brigitte, "mum's the word about it all. Our lips shall remain sealed as to Monsieur Julien's tricks. Will you take a cup of tea?"

"With pleasure," replied Minard.

"Céleste," said the old maid, "ring for Henri to put on the big kettle."

Though they were not to go to the notary's office before two, on the following day, by eight in the morning Brigitte was already "on the rampage," as her brother called it: the fractious, worrying, morning bustle which la Fontaine describes in his fable of the old woman and her two maids.

Brigitte declared that no one would be ready in time if she did not begin early. She would not let Thuillier go to the newspaper office, saying that if he went out, she should see no more of him; she nagged at Joséphine to have breakfast ready before the usual time; and in spite of what had occurred the day before, she could hardly keep herself from bullying Madame Thuillier, who did not act so fully as she could have wished on Brigitte's favorite saying: "Better too soon than too late."

Then she went down to make the same commotion among the Collevilles; she set her veto on a far too showy dress that Flavie proposed to wear, and gave express orders to Céleste as to the gown and bonnet she was to appear in. As to Colleville, who, as he represented, was bound to go to his office, she made him put on his frock coat before going out, and set his watch by hers, warning him that *anyhow* if he were late they would not wait for him.

And so, funnily enough, it came to pass that it was Brigitte who, after goading everybody about her, was very near being unready herself at the appointed hour. Under pretence of helping everybody, besides her usual occupations, which no earthly consideration would have induced her to relax, she had an eye and a finger in so many places at once that at last she was fairly overdone.

The unpunctuality of which she was so nearly guilty was ascribed by her to a hairdresser, for whom she had sent on this great occasion "to part her hair straight." The artist having chosen to dress her head in the fashion, had been obliged to do his work all over again to restore his patient to her ordinary appearance, which consisted, in fact, in not having her hair dressed at all, but always looking like a cat pulled through a hedge backward, to use a vulgar phrase.

By about half-past one la Peyrade, Thuillier, Colleville, Madame Thuillier, and Céleste were all ready in the drawing-room. Flavie joined them almost immediately; she came in clasping her bracelets to avoid a squabble, and was relieved to find that Brigitte was not before her. As to Brigitte, furious already at feeling herself late, she had another cause for vexation. The importance of the occasion had seemed to her to demand stays, an elegancy in which she did not usually indulge. And the unhappy maid who was at this moment lacing her, and trying to discover exactly how tight she wanted them to be drawn, alone knew all the storm and stress of "stays-days."

"I would just as soon be set to put the obelisk into stays," said the girl, "and I believe it would turn out a better figure; at any rate it would not use such language."

While they were laughing among themselves without a sound, at the flagrant breach of order in which "Queen Elizabeth" was caught, the concierge came in, and gave to Thuillier a sealed letter that had just been placed in his hands with this address:

"Monsieur Thuillier, proprietor of the *Écho de la Bièvre*. To be delivered immediately."

The addressee hastily opened the packet and found within a copy of a ministerial paper which had already shown some discourtesy and hostility, refusing the exchange which is commonly effected with much good-will among the offices, paper for paper.

Thuillier, greatly puzzled by the delivery of this missive at his residence and not at the offices of the *Écho*, hastily un-

folded the sheet and read the following paragraph with such feelings as may be imagined. It was marked for notice with a red pencil.

"An obscure newspaper was about to die decently in the dark, when a man of newly fledged ambitions took it into his head to galvanize it. He aims at making it a stepping-stone to climb from municipal office to the coveted position of a member of the Chamber. This intrigue has happily come to light, and must prove abortive. Electors will not allow themselves to be misled by the insidious hints in this sheet of news, and when the time is ripe, if ridicule should not have routed this imprudent candidate, we will take it upon ourselves to show him that for a man to attain to the honor of representing his country, it is not enough to be able to purchase an outcast paper, and to keep a 'white-washer' to put the fearful jargon of his articles and pamphlets into readable French. We say no more to-day; but our readers may rely on being kept informed as to the progress of this electoral farce, if the chief actor is brave enough to go through with it."

Twice did Thuillier read this declaration of war, which was far from leaving him unmoved, and then, taking la Peyrade aside:

"Look here," said he, "this looks serious."

The Provençal read the passage.

"Well," said he.

"What—well?" said Thuillier.

"What do you find so serious in this?"

"What that is serious? Why, the article is exceedingly offensive to me, I should say."

"And it does not strike you that here you have again some virtuous Cérizet who, out of revenge, is trying to trip you up?"

"Cérizet, or any other man—whoever wrote this, is an insolent ruffian," cried Thuillier hotly; "and the matter will not stop here."

"If you take my advice," said la Peyrade, "you will make

no rejoinder. You are not named nor identified, though of course it is difficult not to suppose yourself attacked. We must let the enemy declare himself more openly; when the moment is ripe we will hit him over the knuckles."

"Not at all," said Thuillier, "it is impossible to remain passive under such an insult."

"The devil!" exclaimed the lawyer, "how thin-skinned you are. But remember, my dear fellow, you are a journalist, and going to stand an election; you must be a little more pachydermatous."

"I, my friend, make it a rule to let no one tread on my toes. Besides, the writer promises to sin again, so we must put a stop to such impertinence."

"Well, try it," said la Peyrade. "It is true that in journalism, as in an election, a raging temper has its advantages. It commands respect, and stops many attacks."

"Certainly," said Thuillier, "*principiis obsta*. Not to-day, as we have not time, but no later than to-morrow I carry that article into court."

"Into court!" cried la Peyrade. "You mean to get the law to interfere? But there is not a case in it. Neither your name nor the paper is mentioned; and, besides, there is something so pitiful in a lawsuit. It is like children who have squabbled, and run to complain to mamma or their tutor. If you had told me that you meant to put Fleury forward in the matter, that I could understand, though the quarrel is personal to yourself, and it is difficult to see in it such an offence to the social status of the paper, as it is the responsible manager's business to ask an account of."

"I dare say," answered Thuillier. "And so you imagine that I mean to commit myself with some Cérizet, or such another swashbuckler of the Government? I, my dear sir, pride myself on my civic courage, which does not yield to prejudice, and instead of taking justice with its own hands, has recourse to the means of defence afforded by the law. Besides, the supreme court takes such a tone, nowadays, about dueling that I have no fancy to expose myself to banishment or a year or two of imprisonment."

"Well," said la Peyrade, "we can discuss all that later. Here comes your sister, and she would think all was lost, if we mentioned this little difficulty in her presence."

As Brigitte came in, Colleville exclaimed:

"Full up!" and began to sing the burden of the *Parisienne*.

"Goodness, Colleville! How vulgar you are," said the late-comer, hastily casting a stone into her neighbor's ground to avoid one being thrown into hers.

"Well, then, are we ready?" she added, settling her cape in front of the glass. "What time is it? We must not be too early, like country folks."

"Ten minutes to two," said Colleville, "my watch goes like the Tuileries clock."

"Then we are just right," said Brigitte. "It will not take us longer to get to the Rue Caumartin. Joséphine," she shouted, opening the drawing-room door, "we shall dine at six, so note the time for putting the turkey down, and mind it is not burnt as it was the other day. Hey! What is that?" she hastily exclaimed, shutting the door she was holding open. "A visitor—bother! I only hope Henri will have the sense to say that no one is at home."

Not at all. Henri came to say that an old gentleman with a ribbon in his buttonhole, and "quite the gentleman," begged to be admitted on urgent business.

"Couldn't you say that we were all out?"

"I should have done so, mademoiselle, if you had not opened the drawing-room door at the very moment, so that the gentleman could see all the family assembled."

"Oh!" said Brigitte, "you are never wrong."

"And what am I to tell him?" asked the man.

"Tell him," said Thuillier, "that I am very sorry that I cannot see him, but that we are expected at the notary's to sign a marriage contract, and if he will return in a couple of hours——"

"I told him all that," replied Henri, "and he said that the contract was the very business that brought him here, and that his call was of more importance to you than to him."

"Well, well, see him and get rid of him in no time," said Brigitte. "It will be shorter than the explanations given by Henri, who is such an orator."

If la Peyrade's opinion had been asked, he perhaps would have come to a different conclusion; for he had already had more than one specimen of the attempts made by some occult power to put a spoke in the wheels of his marriage, and this visit seemed to him of ill omen.

"Show him into my study," said Thuillier, acting on his sister's advice; then opening a door from the drawing-room into that where he meant to receive this importunate caller, he went in first.

Instantly Brigitte had her eye to the keyhole.

"There, now!" cried she, "if that idiot Thuillier has not made him sit down, and at the further end of the room, too, so that it is impossible to hear what they are saying."

La Peyrade meanwhile was pacing the room, his agitation concealed under an affectation of extreme indifference; he even went up to the group of women and made a few pretty speeches to Céleste, which she received with the smiling satisfaction that lay in the spirit of her part. As for Colleville, he was killing time by composing an anagram out of the six words *Le journal l'Écho de la Bièvre;* and by shuffling the letters presently produced this, not very promising for the prospects of the paper, *O d'Écho jarni! la bévue réell* (O the Echo, quite a blunder); but an *e* was wanting for the last word, so the work was not quite perfect.

"What a lot of snuff he takes!" cried Brigitte, still keeping an eye on the adjoining room. "His gold box beats Minard's; I never saw one such a size. But I fancy it is only silver gilt," she added by way of comment. "And he talks and talks, and Thuillier sits listening like a dummy. I don't care, I will go in and say that ladies are not to be kept waiting in this fashion."

She had her hand on the latch when she heard Thuillier's visitor speaking much louder, and she again applied her eye to the keyhole.

"He is up at last," she said with satisfaction.

But presently, perceiving that she was mistaken, and that it was only to speak with greater emphasis that the little old man had risen to his feet and was walking up and down the room—

"On my honor, I will really go in," she said, "and tell Thuillier that we will start now, and he can follow when they have done talking."

So speaking, the old maid gave two short and imperative little taps, and marched boldly into her brother's study.

Peyrade now had the bad taste, excusable only by interest and curiosity, to look through the keyhole at what was going on within. He at once, as he thought, recognized the little old man as he whom he had once seen under the title of "the Commander" at Madame de Godollo's; and then he observed that Thuillier was addressing his sister with such impatience and airs of authority as were very unlike his usual habits of deference and submission.

"Thuillier finds the creature's conversation very interesting, it would seem," remarked Brigitte; "for he ordered me out in the rudest way, though the little old man himself said with great politeness that he had nearly done. 'And wait for me, whatever you do,' said Jérôme. Bless me, since he has taken up with his paper there is no knowing him. He gives himself such airs of leading the whole world with a wand——"

"I am very much afraid," said la Peyrade, "lest he is being mystified by some adventurer; I am almost sure that I saw that little old man with Madame Komorn on the day when I went to advise her to clear out. He must be some one of the same stamp."

"You might have told me so," said Brigitte. "I would have asked him for news of the Countess, so as to let him see that we know something about his Hungarian woman."

At this moment they heard chairs moved; Brigitte flew to the keyhole.

"Yes," said she, "he is going. Jérôme is showing him out, bowing and scraping."

As Thuillier did not immediately reappear, Colleville had time to go to the window, and as he saw the old gentleman step into the vehicle of which the reader has already heard—

"The devil!" he exclaimed, "what a fine livery! If he is an adventurer, it is in the first style."

Presently Thuillier came in. His face was anxious and he spoke very gravely.

"My dear la Peyrade," said he, "you never told us that you had seriously thought of another offer of marriage?"

"Why, yes, I did. I told you that a very rich heiress had been proposed to me, but that my heart was here; that I had not chosen to take the matter up, and that consequently nothing definite had come of it."

"Well, I think you are wrong to make so light of the proposal."

"What, you, in the presence of these ladies, can blame me for being faithful to my first affections, and to our long-standing engagements."

"My dear boy, the interview I have just had has enlightened me considerably; and when you know all that I know, and many other details which will be told to you alone, I am sure you will agree with me. One thing is quite certain: we do not go to the notary to-day. As for you, the best thing you can do is to be off at once to call on Monsieur du Portail."

"That name again! It haunts me like remorse," cried la Peyrade.

"Yes; go there at once. He expects you, and it is an indispensable preliminary to any further steps. When you have seen that worthy gentleman, if you still persist in your suit for Céleste's hand, we may encourage your purpose; till then nothing can be done."

"But, my poor boy," said Brigitte, "you have allowed yourself to be bamboozled by a rascal; the man belongs to the Godollo set."

"Madame de Godollo," replied Thuillier, "is not in the least what you think her, and the best thing to do in this house is never to say a word about her, good or evil. As to la

Peyrade, as this is not the first invitation he has received, I cannot really conceive why he hesitates to go to this Monsieur du Portail——"

"Deuce take it!" cried Brigitte; "but the little old man has altogether bewitched you."

"I can tell you that the little old man is all he appears on the surface. He has seven Orders and a magnificent carriage, and told me things that filled me with amazement."

"Then he is perhaps a fortune-teller, in Madame Fontaine's line, the woman who upset me so one day when I went with Madame Minard to consult her, expecting to have a good laugh at the old witch."

"Well, if he is not a wizard," replied Thuillier, "he has at least a very long arm, and I believe you will get no good out of neglecting his advice. Why, he only just caught sight of you, Brigitte, and he told me your character at once: he said you were a masterly woman, born to command."

"As a matter of fact," said Brigitte, licking her lips over this compliment, as if she had been tasting cream, "the little old man looks quite the gentleman. Listen, my dear boy," she went on to la Peyrade. "Since such a very big pot insists on it, go at any rate to see this du Portail. That, it seems to me, need pledge you to nothing."

"Of course," said Colleville. "If it were I, I would pay thirty calls on all the du Portails, or du Portaux on earth, if I were advised to do so."

As the scene was beginning to be very like that in the *Barbiere,* in which every one desires Basile to go to bed, till he feels quite in a fever, la Peyrade took up his hat in a pet, and went where destiny called him—*Quo sua fata vocabant.*

On arriving at the Rue Honoré-Chevalier, la Peyrade had a qualm; the dilapidated appearance of the house where he was to call made him fancy that he must have forgotten the number. He did not think that any man of such importance as might be ascribed to this Monsieur du Portail, who was such an incubus on his life, could reside in such a spot. It

was with much hesitancy that he addressed himself to the porter, Monsieur Perrache. But when he had mounted to the rooms indicated to him, and found himself in the ante-room, the good style of old Bruno, the man-servant, and the very comfortable appearance of all the accessories, seemed quite suitable to his expectations. He was shown at once into the old gentleman's study, and his surprise was great when he found himself face to face with the so-called *commandeur,* Madame de Godollo's ally, and, as will have been understood, the very man whom he had caught a glimpse of but just now, calling on Thuillier.

"At last," said du Portail, rising to place a chair. "So you have come, recalcitrant youth. You have taken a vast amount of pulling."

"And may I ask, monsieur," said la Peyrade haughtily, without taking the seat that was offered him, "what interest you can possibly have in meddling in my concerns? I do not know you, and I may add that the place where I once happened to see you did not lead me to indulge in any excessive desire to make your acquaintance."

"Where, then, did you see me?" asked du Portail.

"In the rooms of a demirep, who called herself Madame la Comtesse de Godollo."

"On whom you, too, were presumably calling," said the old man, "and with less disinterested aims than mine."

"I did not come here to bandy repartee," replied Théodose. "I have a right, monsieur, to some explanation as to your proceedings in general towards me. I would venture, then, to beg that you will not postpone them by your witty remarks, to which I am not at all in the humor to listen submissively."

"Well, well, my dear boy, sit down," said du Portail. "I am not in the humor to dislocate my neck by speaking up to your height."

The intimation was but reasonable, and was made in a tone that seemed to convey that lordly airs would not scare the old gentleman. So la Peyrade made up his mind to yield to his host's desire, though he took care to obey with the worst grace he could display.

"Monsieur Cérizet," du Portail began, "a man of very good position in the world, and who has the honor of counting you among his friends——"

"I no longer see the man," said la Peyrade vehemently, fully understanding the old man's malicious insinuation.

"At any rate," du Portail went on, "at a time when you did occasionally meet—for instance, when you paid for his dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale*—I desired that virtuous Monsieur Cérizet to sound you as to a marriage——"

"Which I declined," interrupted Théodose, "and which I now refuse more decisively than ever."

"That is just the question," said the gentleman. "Now I, on the contrary, believe that you will accept it; and it is to talk the matter over that I have so long wished to see you."

"But who is this crazy woman you are flinging at my head," said la Peyrade, "and what is she to you? She is, I imagine, neither your daughter nor any relation of yours, for you would surely be less barefaced in your husband-hunting on her behalf."

"The lady," said du Portail, "is the daughter of one of my friends. She lost her father more than ten years since, and from that time has always lived with me. I have given her all the care demanded by her sad condition; her fortune, which I have greatly increased, added to my own, which I intend she should inherit, makes her immensely wealthy. I know that you have no aversion for handsome settlements, since you seek them in the lowest ranks—in such a house as the Thuilliers', for instance, or, to use your own word, in that of a demirep whom you scarcely knew; I consequently supposed that you might be willing to accept them from me, since the young lady's malady is pronounced quite curable, while no one can ever cure Monsieur Thuillier of being a fool or his sister of being a harridan—any more than you can cure Madame Komorn of being a flighty woman of very mediocre virtue."

"It may nevertheless please me to marry the goddaughter of a fool and a vixen, if she is my own choice; nay, if passion

should carry me away, I might become the husband of a disreputable coquette. But no one, neither you, sir, nor cleverer and more powerful men than you, could make me accept the Queen of Sheba if she were forced upon me."

"And for that reason I appeal to your good sense and intelligence; but to speak to a man one must get sight of him. Come, consider what your position is, and do not be alarmed if, like a surgeon anxious to cure his patient, I ruthlessly lay my hand on the wounds of a life that has hitherto been so laborious and storm-tossed. The first point to note is that Céleste Colleville is quite lost to you."

"Why?" said la Peyrade.

"Because I have just left Thuillier quite terrified by a picture of all the disasters he has already incurred, and will yet incur, if he persists in his determination to make his goddaughter marry you. He knows now that it was I who paralyzed the action of the Comtesse du Bruel in the matter of the Cross; that it was I who had his pamphlet seized; that it was I who sent the Hungarian to his house to trick you all so effectually; that it was by my care that the ministerial journals have opened a fire which will be hotter every day, to say nothing of other machinery to be set in motion to hinder his election, if need should arise. So you see, my dear sir, not only have you ceased to have the crowning merit in Thuillier's eyes of being his most influential voter; you are actually the stumbling-stone in the way of his ambition. That is enough to show you that the outworks by which you impressed and governed the family, who, in fact, never really wanted you, are now wholly reduced and dismantled."

"But who are you," said la Peyrade, "that you can flatter yourself that you have done all this?"

"I will not retort that you are too curious, because I shall presently answer that question; but we will go on, if you please, with our autopsy of your past existence—a now dead existence, for which I am preparing a glorious resurrection. You are eight and twenty; you have barely started on the career in which I forbid you taking one step onward. In a

few days from now the Board of the Pleaders' Association will meet, and will censure, in a more or less final verdict, your conduct as to the freehold you so foolishly secured for Thuillier. Now do not deceive yourself: even if you underwent nothing worse than a severe reprimand,—and that is the least that can befall you,—a lawyer is not like the hackney coachman whom the disapproval of the Court could not hinder from driving his cab; if you are but blamed, your name may as well be struck from the roll."

"And it is to your benevolent interference, I suppose, that I owe this precious result?" said la Peyrade.

"I am proud to think so," said du Portail; "for to tow you back into harbor, the first thing was to cut away your tackle. Otherwise you would always be wanting to set your own sails among that ruck of the middle classes."

Seeing that his adversary could certainly play a strong game, the wily Provençal thought it wise to moderate his tone, and said with much more reserve of manner:

"You will, at any rate, allow me, monsieur, to postpone my gratitude till further developments."

"Here you stand, then," said du Portail, "at eight and twenty, without a sou, without a profession, with antecedents that may be called mediocre, and some old acquaintance such as Dutocq and Cérizet 'the Brave'; owing ten thousand francs to Mademoiselle Thuillier, which, as a mere point of conscience, you are bound to repay, even if you had not pledged yourself to do so out of vanity; twenty-five thousand more to Madame Lambert, which you would be only too glad, no doubt, to replace in her hands; and to crown all, this marriage, your last hope, your plank of deliverance, has become impossible. Between you and me, now, if I have any reasonable offer to make, do not you think you may be open to my suggestions?"

"There will be time enough to assert the contrary," replied la Peyrade, "and I can come to no determination so long as your plans in my behalf remain unknown to me."

"I sounded you through others as to a marriage," said du

Portail. "That marriage is indissolubly connected in my mind with another scheme of life which comes to you in the guise of a sort of hereditary vocation. Do you know what the uncle you came to seek in 1829 was doing in Paris? Among you, I know, he was supposed to be a millionaire; as a fact, dying suddenly before you reached him, he did not leave money enough to pay for his burial. A pauper's bier and the common grave—these alone were his."

"Then you knew him?" asked Théodose.

"He was my dearest and oldest friend."

"But then," exclaimed la Peyrade eagerly, "a sum of a hundred louis which reached me from an unknown source, in the early days of my stay in Paris——"

"Was sent by me," said the other. "Overwhelmed at the time by a mass of business which you shall presently understand, I was unfortunately prevented from acting on the kindly interest I felt in you, out of regard for your uncle's memory. This will account for my having left you to ripen, like medlars, on straw, to that rottenness of poverty which involved you in the meshes of a Dutocq and a Cérizet."

"I am not the less obliged to you," said la Peyrade, "and if I had known that you were the generous protector who remained undiscoverable, believe me that, without awaiting your commands, I should have been the first to seize an opportunity of knowing and thanking you."

"Enough of compliments," said du Portail. "To come to the more serious matter of our conference: what would you say if I told you that this uncle, whose protection and support you came to seek in Paris, was one of the agents of that occult power which is the subject of so many absurd fables and so much silly prejudice?"

"I do not follow you," said la Peyrade with anxious curiosity. "Might I beg you to explain your meaning?"

"Well, for instance," du Portail went on, "supposing your uncle were alive and could say to you: 'You want money and influence, my fine nephew; you are eager to rise above the herd, to mingle in the great movements of your time; you

wish to find employment for your active and keen wits, for a mind full of resource, and a decided bent for intrigue; in short, you would like to employ, in a sphere of wealth and fashion, the powers of will and ingenuity which you have until now frittered in barren and thankless efforts to utilize the driest and toughest thing in this world—a man of the middle class. Well, then, bend your head, my worthy nephew, follow me in at the little door I will open to you, into a large house of no great repute indeed, but better than its reputation. As soon as you have crossed the threshold, you may stand up to the full height of your genius, if there is a spark of genius in you. Statesmen and kings will tell you their most secret thoughts; you will be their unknown colleague, and in this path none of the joys that money and important functions can give a man will be beyond your ambition and reach.'"

"But you will allow me to remark," said la Peyrade, "without pretending that I yet fully understand you, that my uncle died in such misery that he was buried at the cost of public charity——"

"Your uncle," du Portail put in, "was a man of the rarest talent; but there was a certain levity in his character which had a fatal effect on his fortunes. He was a spendthrift, eager for pleasure, and took no care for the future; he craved, too, for that happiness, meant only for commoner souls, which is the greatest burden, the greatest snare to those who have any exceptionally high calling—I mean a family and home. He had a daughter on whom he doted, and through her his terrible enemies found a breach which enabled them to plot the terrible catastrophe that ended his life. Your uncle—you see I enter into your argument—your uncle died of rapid poison."

"And that you think an encouragement to tread in the dark ways where you would have me follow him," said la Peyrade.

"But if I myself, my dear sir, should lead the way?"

"You, monsieur!" exclaimed la Peyrade in amazement.

"Yes, I—your uncle's pupil and afterwards his protector and providence. I, whose influence has grown almost daily

for the last half-century. I, who am rich, who have seen successive governments, tumbling over each other's heels like rows of cards, come, each in its turn, to seek from me security and a promise of endurance. I, who am the manager of a vast theatre of marionettes, including Columbines of the pattern of Madame de Godollo; I, who, if it were necessary for the success of one of my comedies or dramas, might appear before you to-morrow wearing the ribbon of the first rank of the Legion of Honor, of the Order of the Garter, or of the Golden Fleece! And would you like to know why neither you nor I shall die by poison? Why I, happier than contemporary kings, can transmit my sceptre to a successor of my own choosing? It is because I—like you, my young friend, notwithstanding your southern complexion—have been cool and deeply calculating; because I never lost my time in trifling on the threshold; because my ardor, when circumstances required me to make a show of it, never lay deeper than the surface. It is more than likely that you have heard of me; well, for your benefit I will open a gap in my cloud. Look at me, mark me well: I have no cloven feet, no sign of a tail; on the contrary, I seem to be the most inoffensive of old gentlemen living on their means in all the quarter near Saint-Sulpice, where, for five and twenty years, I have, I may say, enjoyed the esteem of all; I am known as du Portail; but to you, by your leave, I shall be known as Corentin."

"Corentin!" cried la Peyrade, almost with dismay.

"Yes, monsieur, and as you see, merely by revealing this secret, I lay my hand on your shoulder and enrol you—Corentin, 'the greatest man in the police of modern times,' as was said of me by the author of an article in the *Biographie des Hommes vivants*, though, to do him justice, he knows not a word about my life."

"I will certainly keep your secret, monsieur," said la Peyrade; "but the part you are so kind as to offer me——"

"Terrifies you, or, to say the least, startles you," the old man hastily put in. "Before you even know exactly what it is, the mere word scares you! The secret po-o-o-lice! Prejudice

has set a mark on its brow, and you could not bear to be free from that prejudice?"

"Of course," said la Peyrade, "it is a valuable institution; but I do not think that all that is said about it is calumny. If it were an honorable profession, why should those who pursue it conceal themselves?"

"Because all that endangers society, and which it is their duty to counteract, is plotted and prepared in the dark," said Corentin. "Do thieves and conspirators stick a notice on their hat,—'I am Guillot, the shepherd of this flock,'—or ought we, when we want to apprehend them, to send the crier before us with a bell, as the health officer does who goes round every morning to see that the lodge-porters sweep in front of each door?"

"Monsieur," said la Peyrade, "when a feeling is so general, it is not a prejudice but an opinion; and that opinion must be the rule of every man who has any pretensions to his own respect or that of others."

"And if you could rob this bankrupt notary," cried Corentin, "if you stripped a corpse to enrich the Thuilliers, you could still esteem yourself and hope for the esteem of your order; nay, who knows that there may not have been even darker deeds than this in your life! I am an honester man than you, for outside my duties I cannot accuse myself of a single doubtful action; when I have a good deed placed in my way I have always done it. Do you suppose that for the past eleven years the care of this crazy girl has been a constantly delightful task? But she was the daughter of your uncle, of my oldest friend; and when, as I feel my days declining, I appeal to you, with my hands full of hard coin, to relieve me of this charge——"

"What!" exclaimed la Peyrade, "the crazy girl is my uncle la Peyrade's daughter?"

"Yes, monsieur, the woman I want you to marry is the daughter of Peyrade,—for he had popularized his name,—or, if you prefer it, of Père Canquoëlle, a name he assumed for business purposes from the little estate of les Canquoëlles,

where your father and his eleven children lived in starvation. In spite of your uncle's strict secrecy about his family, do I not know it as if it were my own? Have I not acquired all the information I could get before selecting you for your cousin's husband? You turn up your nose at the police; but, as the common folks say, you owe the best of your nose to the police. Your uncle belonged to it, and thanks to his functions he was Louis XVIII.'s confidant, I might almost say his friend, for the King delighted in his conversation. Your cousin was born in that purple. You, by your character and mind, by the stupid fix into which you have got yourself, inevitably gravitate towards the solution I suggest to you; and understand, monsieur, that it is to take my place, and step into Corentin's shoes. And then you fancy that I have no hold over you; that for the sake of some silly notions of middle-class conceit you can give me the slip!"

La Peyrade was apparently less determined in his refusal than might have been supposed, for the great functionary's warmth, and the sort of annexation claimed over his person, brought a smile to his face.

Corentin, meanwhile, had risen, and striding up and down the room where the scene took place, he went on as if speaking to himself:—

"The police! Why, you might say of the police what Don Basilio says to Bartolo of calumny: 'The police, sir! the police! you do not know what you are scorning!' After all," he went on, "who is it that scorns it? Idiots, who know no better than to insult the thing that is their safeguard. For if you suppress the police, you suppress civilization. Does it ask for the good opinion of such men as they! It seeks to impress them with one feeling alone, that of fear, the great lever by which men are moved—that foul race whose horrible instincts we can scarcely control by the help of God and the devil, the executioner and the constable!"

Then, pausing in front of la Peyrade, and looking at him with a contemptuous smile—

"And you, too," the panegyrist went on, "are you one of

those simpletons who look upon the police as a mere mob of spies and informers, who have never suspected that they are the subtlest politicians, diplomatists of the first water, Richelieus without the cardinal's robes? And Mercury, my dear sir, what of Mercury, the keenest witted of all the gods of the heathen? Was not he the very incarnation of the police? He was, to be sure, the god of thieves as well. So we are better than he, in so far as we do not double the parts."

"And yet," said la Peyrade, "Vautrin, the famous chief of the detective force——"

"Oh, of course, in the lowest depths there is always some mud," replied Corentin, resuming his march. "But at the same time, make no mistake, Vautrin is a man of genius; only his passions, like your uncle's, have led him astray. But go a little higher—for the kernel of the whole question lies in finding the rung of the ladder on which you have the wit to settle. Is Monsieur the Prefect of Police, an honored minister, respected and made much of, a mere spy? Well, monsieur, I am the Prefect of the secret police of diplomacy and state politics; and you hesitate to accept the throne which I, Charles V., in my old age think of abdicating?

"To appear small and do immense work, to live in a den, a comfortable den like this, and command the light; to have an invisible army at command, always ready, always devoted, always obedient; to know the under side of everything, and never to be the dupe of any wire-pulling, because I hold the end of every wire in my hand; to see through every wall, know every secret, and every heart and every conscience—this, monsieur, is the life you are afraid of! You, who were not afraid to plunge into the foul, dark bog of the Thuilliers' house; you, a thoroughbred, have allowed yourself to be harnessed to a hackney cab, to the ignoble tasks of electioneering, and of the paper run by a rich parvenu!"

"A man must do what comes to his hand," said la Peyrade.

"But it is a remarkable fact," Corentin went on, following out his own line of thought, "the language has done us justice; fairer and more grateful than the opinions of men, it

takes the idea developed into the *Police* to be synonymous with civilization and the antipodes of a savage existence, when it speaks of a Polity. And I can solemnly assure you that we care little enough for the prejudice that tries to injure us. None better than we know what men are, and to know men is to scorn their contempt as well as their esteem."

"There is, no doubt, much truth in the arguments you so eagerly put forward," said la Peyrade.

"Much truth!" cried Corentin, sitting down again. "It is the truth, nothing but the truth, but not indeed the whole truth. However, my dear sir, enough of this for to-day. Will you second me in my plan, and marry your cousin with a fortune which cannot be less than five hundred thousand francs: that is my offer? I do not ask you to answer me now. I should have no confidence in a decision that had not been maturely considered. I shall be at home here all to-morrow morning, and can but hope that my conviction may have convinced you."

Then, dismissing his visitor with a curt, dry nod, he added: "I do not say good-bye, but only *au revoir,* Monsieur de la Peyrade."

Thereupon Corentin went to a side table where stood all things needful for preparing a glass of *eau-sucrée,* which he had indeed well earned; and without once glancing at the Provençal, who left the room a little dazed, he seemed to devote himself exclusively to this prosaic mixture.

Was it really needful that a call from Madame Lambert, on the very next day, should add its weight to la Peyrade's decision? The woman had become a mere importunate dun. As the tempter had remarked the day before, there was in his character, in his mind, in his aspirations, and in the follies of his past life a striking concurrence, leading him to a sort of invisible slope down to the curious solution of every difficulty which had suddenly opened before him. Fatality, if the word may be allowed, had been lavish of entanglements to which he was certain to succumb. It was now the 31st of October,

the legal vacation was drawing to an end; the Courts would reopen on the 2d of November, and at the moment when Madame Lambert withdrew, he received an order to appear on that day before the chief authority of his Association.

To Madame Lambert, who urgently pressed for payment under the pretence that she was leaving Monsieur Picot's service and about to return to her own part of the country, he could but say that if she would call again in two days, at the same hour, the money would be ready for her.

To the command to appear before his peers, he replied that he did not recognize the right of the Board to examine him as to a circumstance of his private life. This was answering for the sake of answering, and would inevitably lead to the exclusion of his name from the list of pleaders before his Majesty's Bench. Still, it had an assumption of dignity and protest which saved his self-esteem.

He finally wrote a note to Thuillier, announcing that his visit to du Portail had resulted in proving the absolute necessity for his accepting the other match proposed to him. He released Thuillier from his word, and took back his own, and all with the driest brevity, without any expression of regret for the alliance he was repudiating. In a postscript he added: "We must talk over my position as regards the paper," thus hinting that it might be part of his plans to withdraw from that also.

He took care to keep a copy of this letter, and an hour later, when, in Corentin's study, he was asked to what conclusion his reflections had brought him, in reply he handed to the great chief of the police the renunciation of matrimony that he had just sent off.

"That is well," said Corentin. "But you may perhaps find it necessary to keep up your connection with the newspaper for some little while. That idiot's ambition to be elected is inconvenient to the Government, and we will discuss a little plan for tripping up our municipal councillor. You, in your position as omnipotent chief editor, will perhaps have to play

him some trick, and I do not fancy that your conscience will rebel too stoutly against the task?"

"Certainly not," said la Peyrade, "the recollection of the humiliations to which he has so long exposed me will, on the contrary, give a keen relish to any form of revenge on that commonplace tribe."

"Be cautious," said Corentin, "you are young and must beware of such jaundiced impulses. In our stern calling we neither love nor hate anybody. Men are to us mere pawns—ivory or wooden according to their quality. We are but the sword which cuts what it is bidden to cut; but which has no feeling of good or ill will, and only asks to be kept finely sharpened. Now, to speak of your cousin, to whom, I suppose, you are somewhat curious to be introduced."

La Peyrade had not to affect eagerness; it was very genuine.

"Lydie de la Peyrade," said Corentin, "is now near thirty; but a maiden life, added to a mild form of insanity which has preserved her from all the passions, ideas, and impressions which tell on life, has embalmed her, as it were, in perpetual youth. You would not think her more than twenty; she is fair and slim; her face is very refined, and remarkable for its expression of angelic sweetness. Bereft of her wits by the terrible catastrophe that killed her father, her monomania has a very pathetic feature; she constantly has in her arms, or lying by her side, a bundle of clothes which she rocks and tends with care like a sick child; and excepting only me, and Bruno, my man-servant, whom she knows, all other men are to her doctors whom she consults and obeys as if they were oracles. A sort of crisis which occurred some time ago convinced Horace Bianchon, the prince of medical science, that if the reality of motherhood could but take the place of this long dream, her reason would be completely restored. And would it not be a pleasing task to bring light again to the spirit where it is only under a cloud? And does it not strike you that the bond of relationship that nature has created between you, points you out especially as the means to effect that cure,

of which, as I repeat, neither Bianchon nor the other eminent men with whom he has held consultation have the smallest doubt?

"Now, I will take you to Lydie; but be careful to play your part as a medical man; for the only risk of rousing her from her habitual gentleness arises from not falling in with her one idea—her fancy for taking advice."

After passing through several rooms, la Peyrade and his leader were just going into that where Lydie usually sat when she did not want more space for walking up and down to soothe her imaginary infant, when they suddenly paused at hearing a few chords struck in masterly style on a piano of the finest tone.

"What is that?" asked la Peyrade.

"It is Lydie playing," replied Corentin, with what might be called paternal pride. "She is an admirable musician, and though she no longer writes charming compositions, as she used to do in the time before her wits went astray, she can still often compose, as she plays, airs which go to my soul—the soul of Corentin," said the old man, smiling. "That, I fancy, is high praise of the performer. But we will sit down and listen; if we were to go in, the music would come to an abrupt end, and the consultation would at once begin."

La Peyrade was amazed as he heard an improvised fantasia in which a rare combination of inspiration and science opened to his impressionable soul a source of emotion as deep as it was unexpected. Corentin was delighted at the astonishment expressed by the Provençal, who gave vent to it in repeated exclamations; and the old man, eager to cry up his property, did the same.

"That is good playing, heh?" said he. "Liszt cannot compare with her."

After a very lively *scherzo,* the player began with a prelude *adagio.*

"Aha, she is going to sing," said Corentin, recognizing the air.

"Then she sings, too?"

"Like Pasta and Malibran. Just listen to that!"

And in fact, after a few introductory bars in *arpeggios*, a thrilling voice was heard which seemed to stir the Provençal to the very depths of his being.

"How sensitive you are to music," said Corentin; "you were made for each other."

La Peyrade, with a gesture, exhorted him to silence, and as the song went on, his agitation increasing every moment, at last made him exclaim:

"Good heavens! It is the same air, the same voice!"

Corentin was amazed.

"Do you mean to say," he asked, "that you have already seen and heard Lydie?"

"I do not know—I cannot think it——" replied la Peyrade in a broken voice, "and in any case it is long, very long ago—and yet, that song—that voice—I fancy——"

"Come in," said Corentin.

And hastily opening the door, he drew in the Provençal.

Lydie, her back to the door, and hindered by the sound of the piano from hearing the door opened, did not observe their entrance.

"Look," said Corentin; "have you any recollection of her?"

La Peyrade went forward a few steps, and as soon as he could see the crazy girl's side face:

"It is she!" he cried, wildly clasping his hands over his head.

"Silence!" cried Corentin.

But at Théodose's exclamation, Lydie looked round, and addressing herself to Corentin:

"How unkind and annoying you are," said she, "to disturb me so. You know I cannot bear to be listened to—oh no!" she added, catching sight of la Peyrade in his black coat; "for you have brought me the doctor. I was going to ask you to send for him. The child has never ceased crying all the morning. I have tried to sing her to sleep, but it is of no use."

And she hurried off to a corner where she had contrived

a sort of crib with two chairs and some sofa cushions, and came back with what she called her child.

While with one hand she held her precious burden, as she came up to la Peyrade, with the other—her eyes fixed on the creation of her crazy brain—she was arranging the cap of what she called her darling baby. But as she approached Théodose, he, trembling and white, with a fixed gaze that now fully recognized Mademoiselle de la Peyrade, retired step by step in evident terror, and did not pause till a chair behind him stopped his progress and made him lose his balance, receiving him as he dropped.

So clever a man as Corentin, knowing as he did every detail of the dreadful tragedy in which Lydie had lost her reason, had already guessed and understood the truth; but it was his intention to leave the broad light of evidence to fall on this terrible darkness. "Look, doctor," said Lydie, unwrapping the bundle and sticking the pins between her lips as she took them up one by one, "does not she grow visibly thinner?"

La Peyrade was incapable of speech; his face hidden in his handkerchief, he was breathing in short gasps which would not have allowed of his uttering a word.

Then, with the feverish impatience of her mental disorder: "Look at her, look at her!" said she, vehemently seizing la Peyrade's arm and forcing him to reveal his features—"Good God!" she cried as she saw his face.

And dropping the bundle, she started back. Her eyes grew haggard; she passed her pale hands over her brow and through her hair, tossing it in disorder, and seemed to be making a frantic effort to revive some dormant and stubborn memory in her mind.

Then, like a startled filly that comes close to examine an object that has terrified it, she slowly came close to the Provençal, and bending over him to see his face more clearly, while he held it down and tried to hide it from her, in the midst of perfect silence she studied his features for some seconds. Suddenly she uttered a fearful shriek, she flew for refuge to Corentin's arms, and clinging to him with frenzy she cried aloud:

"Save me, save me! It is he—the wretch—the villain! It was he who did it all."

And with extended finger she seemed to nail the wretched object of her aversion to the spot.

After this outburst she stammered a few incoherent words, her eyes closed. Corentin felt the muscles relax, which a moment before had gripped him like a vise, and Lydie sank into his arms unconscious, while la Peyrade, completely unnerved, never even thought of giving his assistance in supporting her and laying her on the sofa.

"Do not stay here, monsieur," said Corentin. "Go to my study and I will presently join you there."

A few minutes later, having left Lydie to the care of Katt and Bruno, and despatched Perrache post-haste for Doctor Bianchon, Corentin came to la Peyrade.

"You see, monsieur," said he, very gravely, "that while following up the scheme of the marriage with a sort of frenzy, I was fulfilling the will of God."

"Monsieur," said la Peyrade in a contrite tone, "I ought, indeed, to confess to you——"

"It is unnecessary," interrupted Corentin. "There is nothing that you can tell me; on the contrary, it is I who have much to tell you. Old Peyrade, your uncle, in the hope of making a fortune for his daughter, whom he idolized, had meddled in a private case—a thing which you will never do if you take my advice, a difficult thing to manage. In the course of his proceedings in this business, he met the man, Vautrin, of whom you were speaking yesterday, and who had not then joined our ranks as he has done since. Your uncle, clever as he was, was no match in the field against that man, who, indeed, rejected no means in the sphere of his action; neither murder, nor poison, nor rape. To cripple your uncle's powers, Lydie was not indeed carried off, but tempted away from her father's house, and taken to what seemed to be a decent place, where for ten days she was kept shut up; still she was in no great alarm as to her detention and her father's non-appearance; she had been persuaded to believe that every-

thing was done by his orders, and, as you remember, monsieur, she could sing."

"Oh!" groaned la Peyrade, covering his face with his hands.

"Held as a hostage," Corentin went on, "the unhappy girl, in the event of her father's failing to do what was required of him within ten days, was to meet a terrible fate. A narcotic and a man were to play the part of the executioner with the daughter of Sejanus."

"Monsieur, have pity, have pity——", cried Théodose.

"I told you yesterday," said Corentin, "that you had on your conscience perhaps other things still worse than the Thuilliers' house! But you were then so young and without experience; you had brought from your native province the vehement brutality and fever of the south, which, on occasion, plunges blindly onward. Also, your relationship to the victim had become known, and to the artists in crime who were plotting the ruin of this new Clarissa Harlowe, there was a refinement of barbarity so fascinating in using you as their instrument that a more experienced man than you could not have hoped to escape the intrigues of which you were the object. Happily, in all this appalling business, Providence hindered any irreparable mischief. The same drug, according to its application, may deal death or restore health."

"But shall I not be to her an object of horror? Will the reparation you suggest to me be in any way possible?"

"The doctor, sir," said Katt, opening the door.

"How is Mademoiselle Lydie?" asked la Peyrade anxiously.

"Quite calm," replied Katt. "And just now, when to persuade her to go to bed, which she did not want to do, saying that she was quite well, I brought her the bundle of clothes. 'What do you think I can do with that, my poor Katt?' said she, looking quite puzzled. 'If you want me to play with a doll,' said she, 'get me one that is a little better made than that.'"

"You see," said Corentin, grasping the Provençal's hand; "you will have been Achilles' spear."

And he left the room with Katt to speak with Bianchon.

Théodose, left to himself, had been sitting for some time lost in such reflections as may be imagined, when the study door was thrown open and Bruno, the man-servant, admitted Cérizet.

On seeing la Peyrade:

"Aha!" cried he, "I knew that sooner or later it would come to this, and you would call on du Portail. Well, and how is the marriage getting on?"

"It is of yours that we are expecting news," replied the Provençal.

"So you have heard of it?" said Cérizet. "Well, yes, my dear boy. All things must have an end after a long voyage on the stormy seas. You know who the bride is?"

"Yes, a young actress, Mademoiselle Olympe Cardinal, a protégée of the Minards, who are to give her thirty thousand francs on her marriage."

"And that added to thirty thousand promised me by du Portail when your marriage comes off, and to the twenty-five thousand which I got out of your other marriage which did not come off, makes a snug little round sum of eighty-five thousand francs. With that, and a pretty wife, a man must be misguided indeed if he cannot try a little speculation now and again. But first and foremost I have a little matter to settle with you. Du Portail, who is too busy to see me, sent me to you on purpose that we should hit on some way of interfering with Thuillier's return to Parliament. Have you any scheme to that end?"

"No, and I may frankly confess that in the frame of mind resulting from the conversation I have just had with Monsieur du Portail, I do not feel equal to any great effort of invention."

"Matters stand thus," Cérizet went on. "The Government has another candidate in view who has not yet made much show, because there have been difficulties in the way of ministerial arrangements with him. Meanwhile Thuillier's canvass has made some progress; Minard, who had been relied on to make some diversion, has stupidly remained in his corner;

the seizure of your pamphlet gave your dull nominee a certain aroma of popularity. In short, the Ministry are very much afraid lest he should succeed, and nothing could disgust them more than his election. Pompous idiots like Thuillier are a dreadful nuisance in the opposition; like jugs without handles, you never know where to hold them."

"Monsieur Cérizet," said la Peyrade, assuming a patronizing tone, and curious, too, to know how far his man was admitted to Corentin's confidence, "you seem to me singularly well informed as to the private feelings of the Government; pray, have you found your way to a certain office in the Rue de Grenelle?"

"No. All I have told you—for it would seem that we no longer say *tu* to each other—I heard from du Portail," said Cérizet, using the more formal *vous*.

"Indeed," answered la Peyrade, lowering his voice, "and who and what exactly is du Portail, since you have been on intimate terms with him for some time?" (and at Cérizet's hint, he resumed the *tu*). "So clever a fellow as you must have got to the bottom of a man who, between you and me, seems to have something very mysterious about him."

"My dear friend," replied Cérizet, "du Portail is a decidedly superior man. He is a sharp old customer, who has, I fancy, been employed in the management of the crown lands; or, he may have been governor of some of the departments that were absorbed at the fall of the empire—the Department of the Dyle or the Doire, for instance, or Sambre-et-Meuse, or the Deux-Nèthes."

"Aye," said la Peyrade.

"Then, I imagine," continued Cérizet, "he must have feathered his nest, and having a natural daughter, he very ingeniously made for himself a little philanthropical stepping-stone, by giving out that she is the child of a friend of his named Peyrade, and that he had adopted her. And then, to bear out the probability of the tale, your name of la Peyrade suggested the idea of your marriage—since, after all, she must marry somebody."

"Well and good; but how do you account for his intimate knowledge of the wishes of the Government, and his interest in the election?"

"Nothing can be more natural," replied Cérizet. "Du Portail is a man who loves money and who loves meddling; he has done some little service, as an amateur, to Rastignac, the great electoral wire-puller; they are, I think, from the same part of the country. The other, in return, gives him information that enables him to gamble in stocks."

"Was it he who told you all this?" asked la Peyrade.

"What do you take me for?" replied Cérizet. "I play the simpleton to the good old man, from whom, as you see, I have extracted a promise of thirty thousand francs. I growl, but I make Bruno talk, the old man-servant. You can get into the family, my dear fellow; du Portail is enormously rich; he will get you made Sous-Préfet; and from that to be a Préfet, with such a fortune as you will have, is but a step, as you understand."

"I am much obliged for your information," said la Peyrade; "at any rate I shall know which foot I stand on. But how did you first know him?"

"Oh, that is a very long story. By my intervention he recovered a large quantity of diamonds that had been stolen from him."

At this moment Corentin returned.

"All is going on well," said he to la Peyrade. "Her reason seems to be gradually returning. Bianchon, to whom I was obliged to explain everything, wishes to talk to you. So, my dear Monsieur Cérizet, we must put off our little consideration of Thuillier's affairs till this evening."

"Well, here he is at last," said Cérizet, slapping la Peyrade on the shoulder.

"Yes," said Corentin, "and you know what I promised you? You may rely on getting it."

Cérizet went off in high spirits.

On the day following this, when Corentin, la Peyrade, and

Cérizet were to have held council, with a view to establishing a state of siege about Thuillier's nomination—the candidate himself was discussing with his sister the letter in which Théodose announced his resignation of all claims to Céleste's hand, being more especially exercised by the postscript, which hinted that the Provençal might also retire from the post of editor-in-chief of the newspaper. At that moment Henri came in to inquire whether he could see Monsieur Cérizet.

Thuillier's first impulse was to get rid of this unexpected visitor. However, on thinking the matter over, it occurred to him that in the dilemma in which la Peyrade might leave him at any minute, Cérizet might prove a valuable assistant. Consequently he said that he was to be shown in.

At the same time, his welcome was very cool, with a hint of expectancy. Cérizet, on his part, came in unabashed, as a man who has calculated the consequences of the step he has taken.

"Well, my dear sir," said he to Thuillier, "are you beginning to see daylight with regard to Monsieur de la Peyrade?"

"What do you mean by that?" asked the old beau.

"Well," said Cérizet, "the man who, after trying a thousand intrigues to marry your goddaughter, suddenly breaks off the engagement, as he will one day break through the contract he made you sign, giving him the lion's share in the editorship of the newspaper, can hardly, as it seems to me, be the object of such blind confidence on your part as he has been hitherto."

"Then you have some definite information as to la Peyrade's intending to cease working with me on the newspaper?" asked Thuillier eagerly.

"No," replied the usurer. "On the terms that now exist between us, as you may suppose, I have not seen him, and still less am I in his confidence. But, to draw an inference, I have only to start from the man's well-known character; and you may regard it as certain that from the moment when he believes it to be to his advantage to part company, he will simply cast you off as he would an old coat. I have gone through it all and speak from experience."

"Then you had dealings with him before this business of the newspaper?" said Thuillier.

"I should think so, indeed!" answered Cérizet. "That business over the house that he got you mixed up in was started by me in the first instance. He was to put me in communication with you, and get me the first lease of the house for subletting; but the unlucky story of the raised bid leaked out, and he took advantage of it to swindle me and keep all the profits in his own hands."

"The profits!" remarked Thuillier. "I do not see that they amounted to much, and with the exception of the marriage, which he now refuses——"

"What!" cried the usurer. "Ten thousand francs that he got out of you to begin with on the excuse of that Cross which you are still awaiting for, and then twenty-five thousand due to Madame Lambert, for which you stood security, and that you are likely enough to pay like a gentleman."

"What do I hear?" cried Brigitte, in a fury. "You have stood security for twenty-five thousand francs?"

"Yes, mademoiselle," said Cérizet. "There was a mystery behind that transaction,—the woman had no more lent the money that I had,—and even if I did not lay my finger on the true explanation, there was certainly some very dirty work at the bottom of it. But la Peyrade had the knack of whitewashing himself in your brother's eyes, and of making it appear that he was both maligned and indispensable——"

"But if you have not seen Monsieur de la Peyrade since, how do you know that I stood security for him?" interrupted Thuillier.

"From the woman herself, monsieur, who tells everybody that she is sure now of being paid."

"Well," said Brigitte to her brother, "you do business in style!"

"Mademoiselle," Cérizet went on, "I wanted to give monsieur a little fright, but in reality I do not think you will lose anything. Without knowing exactly whom la Peyrade is to marry, it seems to me hardly possible that the lady's family

can leave him under the onerous burden of two such discreditable debts; indeed, if necessary, I myself would interfere."

"While thanking you, monsieur, for your officious intervention," said Thuillier, "allow me to say that it surprises me a little. The manner of our parting was not such as to justify me in expecting it."

"Indeed," said Cérizet, "did you really fancy I could owe you a grudge for that? I was sorry for you, that was all. I saw that you were under the spell, and I said to myself that you must be left to find out la Peyrade; but I knew that the day of justice would ere long dawn for me. With that young gentleman, a turn for the worse is never very long delayed."

"Excuse me," said Thuillier, "but I do not regard as a 'turn for the worse' the breaking off of the marriage we had intended; the rupture was in some degree by common consent."

"And the predicament in which he intends to leave you by throwing up his post as editor-in-chief?" said Cérizet; "and the debt for which he is making you responsible? Do you regard these too as amenities?"

"Monsieur Cérizet," said Thuillier, still cautiously reserved, "as I once told la Peyrade: No man is indispensable, and if the place of editor-in-chief to my newspaper should fall vacant, I am quite sure I should find many men eager to offer me their services."

"Is that speech aimed at me?" asked Cérizet. "It would be a very bad shot; for even if you should do me the honor to bid for my assistance, I could not possibly give it you. I was long since sickened of journalism. I had allowed myself, I do not know how, to be ensnared by la Peyrade into one more campaign with you; but this last experiment being unsuccessful, I am fully determined never to be caught again. I came to talk to you of quite another matter."

"Ah!" said Thuillier.

"Yes," replied Cérizet. "Remembering the handsome way

in which you treated the business of this house, in which you do me the honor to receive me, it occurred to me that I could not do better than turn to you for an affair of something of the same kind which happens just to have come in my way. But I shall not do like la Peyrade. I shall not say that I want to marry your goddaughter, and that I am doing it all out of love and devotion to you. If the thing comes off, I want a share in it. Then, I fancy that you, mademoiselle, must find the business of subletting this large house a rather serious undertaking; for I observed just now that all your shops are still unlet. Well, if you would reconsider the question of the lease which la Peyrade choked off, that might be a consideration in the division of profits. This, monsieur, was the purpose of my visit, and you see that it is quite apart from the newspaper, which has nothing to do with it."

"But we must know first what the business it," said Brigitte.

"It is the exact opposite," said Cérizet, "to the transaction you entered into with la Peyrade. You got this house for a mere song, but you were troubled by a higher bidder. Now, in this case, there is a farm in la Beauce which has just been sold dirt cheap, and for a small additional sum you can get it for an amazingly low price." And Cérizet proceeded to set forth the details of the business, which the reader will excuse us from repeating, seeing that they are, in all probability, likely to interest him less than they interested Mademoiselle Brigitte. His explanation was clear and emphatic; it quite captivated the old maid; and Thuillier, in spite of his prejudice and distrust, was obliged to confess that the transaction proposed to him promised to turn out a capital speculation.

"Still, we must see the place," said Brigitte.

It may be remembered that when in treaty for the house, she would not pledge herself to la Peyrade by a single word before inspecting the premises.

"Nothing can be easier," said Cérizet. "I myself, in case

we should not come to terms, want to know what I am doing, and I had intended to make a little excursion there one day soon. I will be at your door this afternoon, if you like, in a post-chaise; by to-morrow morning, early, we shall be at the place; we will look about us, breakfast, and can be home again to-morrow by dinner-time."

"But traveling post is very lordly," said Brigitte. "The diligence, I should think——"

"Traveling by diligence, you never know when you may get to your journey's end," said Cérizet. "And as to the expense, you need not worry over that. I should make the excursion alone, if not in your company, so I offer you two seats in my chaise. Well, and then, if the bargain is concluded, we will share all the expense."

To a miserly mind small advantages are often a determining factor in important transactions; after making some little difficulties for form's sake, Brigitte accepted the proposed arrangement, and that same day the trio set out on the road to Chartres. Cérizet had advised Thuillier not to give la Peyrade notice of his intended journey, lest the Provençal should take it into his head to turn his absence to account to play him some scurvy trick.

By five o'clock next day they were back in Paris; the uncle and aunt, who in Cérizet's presence had not been free to discuss the business between themselves, were of opinion that the purchase would be a good one. They had found land of prime quality, buildings and outhouses in good order, beasts and stock that looked sound and promising; and to Brigitte the ownership of a country estate was the crowning consecration of wealth.

"Minard," said she, "has nothing but his town house and some investments. We shall have land, real estate: that is the only way to be truly rich."

Thuillier was not so much bewitched by his day-dream —of which the realization was not yet in immediate pros-

pect—as to lose sight of his election and his newspaper. His first inquiry was for the *Écho* which had come out that morning.

"It has not been delivered," replied the servant.

"That is good management!" said Thuillier irritably. "The owner even is not duly served."

And though it was near the dinner hour, and after the long drive he was more in the mood to take a bath than to go to the office, Thuillier called a hackney cab and went off to the Rue d'Enfer.

Here was a fresh annoyance. The next issue was made up. La Peyrade and all the clerks were gone; and as for Coffinet, who, released from his functions as messenger, ought to have been at his post as concierge, he had gone "of an errand," according to his wife, and had taken the key of the cupboard in which the surplus copies of the paper were kept. So it was impossible to get at the ill-starred print which Thuillier had come so far to procure.

To depict Thuillier's indignation is impossible. He marched up and down the editor's office, talking aloud to himself, as a man does under passionate excitement.

"I will turn out every man of them!" cried he, and we are obliged to mitigate the vigor of his furious expressions.

As he fulminated his anathema, there was a tap at the door of the room where he uttered it.

"Come in," said Thuillier, in a voice expressive of his irritation and rage.

In came Minard, who threw himself into Thuillier's arms.

"My dear, my admirable friend," the Mayor began, his embrace ending in a vehement hand-shaking.

"What? Why? What has happened?" asked Thuillier, understanding nothing of these ardent demonstrations.

"My dear fellow, it is the handsomest thing. It is impossible to be more chivalrous and disinterested. The effect in the arrondissement is magnificent."

"Of what? again I ask you," cried Thuillier, out of all patience.

"The article, the step you have taken," Minard went on; "the whole thing is so noble, so dignified."

"But what article—what step?" said the proprietor of the *Écho*, beside himself with irritation.

"The article in this morning's issue."

"This morning's?"

"Come now, do you mean to say that you wrote it in your sleep; or are you heroical, as Monsieur Jourdain talked prose, without knowing it?"

"I?" said Thuillier; "I have written no article. I have been out of Paris for twenty-four hours, and I do not even know what there is in to-day's number; nor is there even an office boy in the place to find me a copy."

"I have one," said Minard, producing the longed-for sheet out of his pocket; "and if you did not write the article, at any rate you inspired it, and the deed is done."

Thuillier had snatched the paper that Minard held out to him, and devoured rather than read the following paragraph:—

" 'For some time now the owner of this regenerate newspaper has endured uncomplainingly, and without reply, such cowardly insinuations as are poured by the venial press upon every citizen who, strong in his convictions, refuses to pass under the Caudine Forks of the existing powers. For some time now, a man who has given ample proofs of disinterestedness and self-sacrifice in the important functions of a Paris edile, has endured the imputations of being no more than an ambitious intriguer. M. Jérôme Thuillier, from his dignified preëminence, has scorned to notice these vulgar insults, till, encouraged by his contemptuous silence, suborned writers have dared to say that a newspaper, which is the outcome of the purest convictions and most devoted patriotism, was the mere stepping-stone and speculation of a man who wanted to be elected as a Deputy to the Chamber.

" 'M. Jérôme Thuillier has stood unmoved by these accusations, because truth and justice are long-suffering, and he

meant to crush the reptile with one blow. The day of judgment is come.'

"The devil is in that la Peyrade!" exclaimed Thuillier, pausing in admiration. "How he hits it off!"

"It is magnificent!" cried Minard.

Thuillier went on reading aloud.

"'Everybody, friends and foes alike, will do M. Jérôme Thuillier the justice to admit that he has done nothing to court the nomination which was spontaneously offered to him.'

"Quite true," said Thuillier. Then he again read on:

"'But, seeing that his feelings have been so shamelessly misrepresented, his intentions so disgracefully travestied, M. Jérôme Thuillier owes it to himself, and yet more to the great national party for which he is one of the humble combatants, to set an example which shall annihilate the base sycophants of power.'

"La Peyrade really does me great credit," said Thuillier, stopping once more, "and I understand now why he would not let them send me the paper. He wanted to enjoy my surprise. *'Annihilate the base sycophants of power,'*" he repeated, and went on:

"'Far from founding a paper in opposition to the Dynasty, merely to advertise and support his nomination, M. Thuillier, at the moment when his return seems favored by the most encouraging prospects, and the most disheartening for his rivals, here publicly declares, in the most formal, definite, and irrevocable terms, that he withdraws from the contest——"

"What—what is that?" cried Thuillier, thinking he had misread or misunderstood the words.

"Go on," said the Mayor.

And as Thuillier, with a bewildered look, seemed unable to go on, Minard took the paper out of his hands, and read instead and for him:

" 'Withdraws from the contest and requests his supporters to transfer to M. Minard, Mayor of the eleventh arrondissement, his friend and colleague in the Municipal Council, all the votes which they seemed ready to register in his behalf.' "

"It is infamous!" cried Thuillier, recovering his speech. "You have bribed that Jesuit la Peyrade——"

"Do you mean to say," asked Minard, amazed at Thuillier's dismay, "that you had not agreed with him as to the contents of this article?"

"The villain has taken advantage of my absence to insert it in the paper. I understand now why he kept back my copy."

"But, my dear fellow, that will seem a very unlikely story to the outside world."

"But I tell you it is a betrayal, an abominable trick. Withdraw from the contest! Why should I withdraw?"

"Indeed, my dear sir," said Minard, "if this is an abuse of confidence, I am deeply grieved; but I have issued my circulars, and now I cannot help it. Luck attend the lucky one is all I can say."

"Leave me," said Thuillier. "It is a hoax paid for by you."

"Monsieur Thuillier," cried Minard, in a fury, "I advise you not to repeat that remark unless you are prepared to answer for it."

Happily for Thuillier, whose profession of civic courage we have already heard, he was saved from a reply by Coffinet, who opened the office door to announce:

"A deputation of the voters of the twelfth arrondissement."

The arrondissement was represented by five gentlemen. A druggist, as their chief, addressed Thuillier as follows:—

"We have come, monsieur, in consequence of the publication of an article inserted in this morning's issue of the *Écho de la Bièvre,* to ask you exactly what the reason and meaning are of that declaration, thinking it incredible that, after canvassing for our suffrage, you should come just before the election, in a fit of quixotic puritanism, to throw our ranks into disorder and disunion, and probably secure the return of the ministerial candidate. A nominee is not his own master; he belongs to the electors who have promised him the honor of their vote. However," added the orator, looking at Minard, "the presence on these premises of the candidate you have chosen to recommend shows his connivance; I need not ask who are the dupes in this affair."

"No, gentlemen," replied Thuillier, "I have not retired from being your candidate. That article was written and printed without my knowledge. You will read my contradiction to-morrow in that same paper, and at the same time you will learn that the wretch who has betrayed my confidence is dismissed from the editorship."

"So, in fact," said the speaker, "and notwithstanding your announcement to the contrary, you intend still to stand as a candidate for the opposition?"

"Yes, gentlemen, or die first! And I can only beg that you will use all your influence in the quarter to neutralize officially this base trickery, pending the publication of my most emphatic denial."

"Good! very good!" said the deputation.

"And as to Monsieur Minard's presence, as my rival, on these premises, he is not here by my invitation; indeed, at the moment of your arrival I was discussing the matter with him in a far from friendly way."

"Very good, very good!" said the electors once more.

So after shaking hands warmly with the druggist, Thuillier escorted the deputation to the head of the stairs.

On his return to the editor's room he spoke:

"My dear Minard," said he, "I retract the words that gave you offence; but at any rate you see that my indignation was genuine."

Coffinet again opened the door and announced:

"A deputation of the electors of the eleventh arrondissement."

These were represented by seven persons; a hosier, as spokesman for the deputation, made the following little speech, addressing himself to Thuillier:

"Sir, it was with the greatest admiration that we learned this morning, from your paper, the great act of public virtue which has touched us all so deeply. By withdrawing from the contest you give proof of the rarest disinterestedness, and the esteem of your fellow-citizens——"

"Excuse me," said Thuillier, interrupting him, "I cannot allow you to proceed. The article on which you are good enough to compliment me was inserted by mistake."

"What!" said the hosier, "are you not intending to retire? And can you imagine that as a rival to Monsieur Minard, whose presence on these premises is, in that case, somewhat strange, you can have any hope of success?"

"Sir," said Thuillier, "be so kind as to desire the electors to wait for to-morrow's issue; in that I will publish the fullest explanations. The article printed this morning is the result of a misapprehension."

"So much the worse for you, monsieur," said the hosier. "You are losing an opportunity of placing yourself, in the opinion of your fellow-citizens, on a level with Washington and the other great men of antiquity."

"Wait till to-morrow, gentlemen," said Thuillier. "I am not the less obliged to you for your visit; and when you know the whole truth, I hope you will not think that I have ceased to merit your esteem."

"It is a very queer mess," observed an elector in a low tone.

"Yes," replied another; "it looks rather like making fools of us."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," the president remonstrated, "wait till to-morrow. We shall then see the candidate's explanations."

And the party withdrew.

Thuillier would probably not have attended them beyond the door of the office; at any rate he was stopped by the arrival of la Peyrade at that very moment.

"I have just come from your house," said la Peyrade, in a familiar tone. "They told me I should find you here, my dear boy."

"And you followed me, no doubt, to give me some explanation as to the strange article you have taken the liberty of publishing in my name?"

"Exactly so," replied la Peyrade. "The man you know of, and whose far-reaching influence you have already felt, confided to me yesterday, in your interest, the feeling of the Government, and I saw clearly that your defeat was inevitable. I therefore arranged for your dignified and honorable retirement."

"Very good, sir. But you will understand that henceforth you can have nothing to do with editing the paper?"

"I had come to tell you the very same thing."

"And also, I suppose, to settle up our little account."

"Gentlemen," said Minard, "I see you have business to attend to, and I will take my leave."

"Here are ten thousand francs," said la Peyrade, "which I will beg you to hand to Mademoiselle Brigitte; and here is the paper you signed as security for the twenty-five thousand francs due to Madame Lambert, for which I here have her receipt."

"Quite right, monsieur——" said Thuillier.

La Peyrade simply bowed and went.

"Viper!" said Thuillier, as he saw him depart.

"Cérizet hit the mark," said la Peyrade. "A pompous idiot."

The blow struck at Thuillier's election was fatal, but

Minard did not benefit by it. While they were fighting for the suffrages of the electors, a man from the Tuileries, an aide-de-camp to the King, appeared on the scene, with his pockets full of tobacco-licenses and such electioneering small change, and stole a march on the two rival candidates, who thought only of spiting each other. It need hardly be said that Brigitte did not get her farm; it was but a mirage conjured up to get Thuillier out of Paris and enable la Peyrade to play his stroke. This, while doing the Government a service, was at the same time a piece of revenge for all the humiliations the Provençal had suffered.

Thuillier had his suspicions of Cérizet's complicity; but the man continued to justify himself, and by negotiating the sale of the *Écho de la Bièvre,* which had become a perfect nightmare to its hapless proprietor, he made himself seem as white as snow.

The ill-starred newspaper, bought up by Corentin, became a weekly, sold on Sundays in the taverns after being concocted in the dens of the police.

About a month after the scene which had proved to la Peyrade that an error in the past had irrevocably sealed his fate in the future, he had married his unhappy cousin, who now had long intervals of lucidity, though she could not entirely recover her reason till the time and conditions should be fulfilled which the physicians had counted on.

One morning Corentin and his future successor were together in the study.

Théodose, sharing in his labors, was serving his apprenticeship for the difficult and delicate duties of his office under this great master. But Corentin did not find that his pupil brought to his lessons so much spirit and good-will as he could have wished. He saw that the sense of a certain degradation weighed on la Peyrade's soul; time would heal the wound, but the scar was not yet formed.

After opening a number of letters containing the reports of his agents, Corentin just glanced through the informa-

tion, far less often valuable than might be supposed, and tossed them into a basket from which they were taken to be burned in a heap.

But to one of these reports he devoted particular attention; as he read it, he faintly smiled now and again, and when he had done he handed the document to la Peyrade.

"Here," said he, "this will interest you, and you will see that in our business, which seems to you so serious, we sometimes find comedy in our way. Read it aloud; it will amuse us."

Before la Peyrade had begun:

"You must know," added Corentin, "that the report comes to me from the man known as Henri, placed by Madame Komorn in service with the Thuilliers."

"So servants recommended by you," said la Peyrade, "are among your agents?"

"Sometimes," replied Corentin. "To know everything, every means must be tried; but a vast deal of nonsense is talked about such matters. It is not the fact that the police makes a system of such arrangements, or has ever, at certain times, by a sort of general enlistment of footmen and women-servants, spread its net through the private life of families. There is no hard and fast rule in our methods; we act as time and circumstances require. I wanted to keep an eye and ear open at the Thuilliers', so I sent Madame Godollo: she on her part, to help her out, placed one of our men there —an intelligent fellow as you will perceive; but on some other occasion I might arrest a servant who came to tell me his master's secrets, and by my intervention a warning might be sent to put the interested party on his guard, and tell him not to trust the people about him."

" 'Monsieur the Chief of the secret Police,' wrote the man known as Henri, 'I did not stay with the little baron. He is a man wholly given up to pleasure, and not once, as I believe, did I pick anything up in his house in the least worth reporting to you. I have found another place where I have seen

a good many things which, as bearing on the mission entrusted to me by Madame de Godollo, may prove to be interesting. So I take the liberty of bringing them to your knowledge. The house where I am employed is that of an old professor, by name M. Picot, lodging on the first floor, Place de la Madeleine, in the house and in the very rooms formerly inhabited by my previous masters the Thuilliers.'

"What!" cried la Peyrade, interrupting himself, "old Picot, that penniless old dolt, living in those splendid rooms?"

"Aye, aye," said Corentin, "life is full of stranger things than that. You will come to the explanation. Our correspondents—they all drown the facts in details—are over-careful to dot their *i*'s."

The man known as Henri went on:—

"'The Thuilliers left these parts some time ago to return to their Quartier Latin. Mademoiselle Brigitte was never very sweet on our part of the town; her dreadful want of education made her feel uncomfortable. Because I speak correctly she would always call me the orator, and she could not bear M. Pascal the concierge, seeing that, being, as he is, a beadle in the church of the Madeleine, he has some manners; and even the tradesmen, in the market situate at the back of the church, where she bought things, of course, she always had some fault to find with them, saying they gave themselves consequential airs, only because they do not use bad words as they do in the other markets, and laughed in her face when she beat down their prices. She has let her house here out and out to one M. Cérizet, a very ugly man with only half a nose, and he pays her a rent of fifty-five thousand francs a year. This leaseholder seems to know what he is about. He has just married an actress from one of the small theatres, and he was going to settle on the first floor and establish himself there as well as the offices of a company for insuring marriage portions, when M. Picot arrived from England with his wife, a very wealthy Englishwoman, saw the

rooms, and offered him such a good price that M. Cérizet decided on giving them up to him. And then it was that, being introduced by M. Pascal the concierge, I took service with M. Picot.'

"Monsieur Picot, married to a rich Englishwoman!" Peyrade again put in. "It is incomprehensible!"

"Read on," said Corentin, "you will understand presently."

"'My new master's fortune is quite a long story, and I will report it to you, monsieur, because another person, which Madame de Godollo was interested in his marriage, is mixed up with it all. This other person is the man known as Félix Phellion, who invented a new star, and in despair at not being able to have the young lady who was to have been married to M. la Peyrade—him that Madame de Godollo tackled so smartly——'

"The rascal," said Théodose, "how he speaks of me! But he does not know yet whom he has to deal with."

Corentin had a hearty laugh, then he told la Peyrade to read on.

"'And who in despair at not being allowed to marry her had gone off to England, where he was to set sail on a voyage round the world; just like a lover. M. Picot, on hearing he was gone, for he had been his master and was interested in the young man, went off at once to stop this silly freak, which was not so very difficult. The English are very touchy about discoveries, and when they saw M. Phellion coming to go on board with their own professors, they asked him if he had an order from the Admiralty, which, as he could not show, they laughed in his face, and would not listen to a word, but went off without him for fear he should know more than they do.'

"Your Monsieur Henri does not think much of the *entente cordiale,*" said la Peyrade, laughing.

"No," said Corentin. "And in all our agents' reports you will be constantly struck by their general spirit of contempt. But what is to be done, you cannot expect that angels will take up the trade of spy?"

"'Left on the seashore, Télémaque and Mentor——'" la Peyrade went on.

"Our men are scholars, you perceive," Corentin put in.

"'Were about to return to France, when M. Picot received a letter, such as none but an Englishwoman could ever write. It said that the writer had read his *Theory of Perpetual Motion;* that she had heard of his magnificent discovery of a new star; that she regarded him as a genius at least equal to Newton, and that if the hand that penned these lines, with a fortune of eighty thousand pounds sterling or two millions of francs might meet his views, it was his to command. M. Picot liked the offer; he went to the place appointed by the English lady—a woman of forty at least, with a red nose, long teeth, and spectacles. The good man's first notion had been to get her to marry his pupil; but seeing at once that this was out of the question, before accepting for himself, he pointed out that he was an old man, three parts blind; that it was not him that discovered the star, and that he had not a sou to bless himself with.

"'The Englishwoman said that Milton was not a young man and was stone blind; that perhaps M. Picot had only a cataract, that she knew all about it, being, as she was, a surgeon's daughter, and that she would pay for the operation; that she was not particular about his having discovered a star; that it was the inventor of the *Theory of Perpetual Motion* who, for ten years past, had been the man of her dreams, and that to him she repeated the offer of her hand with eighty thousand pounds sterling, or two millions

of francs. M. Picot said that if he recovered his sight, and if the lady would live in Paris, seeing as he had always hated England, he would marry her. The operation was performed, and with success, and by the end of three weeks the couple arrived in our capital. I have all these details from madame's maid, with whom I am on the best of terms——' "

"You see, the conceited ape!" said Corentin, laughing.

" 'But the rest of what I have to tell M. le Directeur, are facts of which I can speak as eye-witness, and to which I can take my oath. As soon as M. and Madame Picot had done furnishing, all in the most sumptuous and comfortable style, my master gave me a packet of invitations to dinner, to deliver to the Thuillier family, the Collevilles and family, the Minards and family, M. l'Abbé Gondrin, priest of the Madeleine, in short, for almost all the guests that had met at a dinner when, a month or more ago, he had happened to drop in on the Thuilliers, and behaved in a most extraordinary manner. Everybody who got an invitation was so astonished to hear that the old man had married money, and was living in the Thuilliers' apartment, that they most of them came to see M. Pascal the concierge, to ask if they were not the victims of a hoax. The information proving veritably true, all the company turned up in due course; but M. Picot himself was missing. They were received by Madame Picot, who speaks very little French, and could only say to each arrival, "My husband will be here presently," and then could make no conversation, so that the company was very dull and uncomfortable. At last M. Picot came in; everybody was amazed at seeing, not a shabby, blind old fellow, but a smart, hale old man, carrying his years gayly, like M. Ferville of the *Gymnase*.

" ' "I must apologize, ladies," says he in an airy way, "for not being on the spot when you arrived; but I was at the Academy of Sciences watching an election—that of M. Félix

Phellion whom you all know, and who has just been elected unanimously but for three votes."

"'This news evidently interested the company. Then M. Picot went on:—

"'"I have also to apologize to you, ladies, for the rather strange manner of my behavior here, in this very place, a few weeks ago. My excuses were in the first place my infirmity, the worrits of a lawsuit, and an old housekeeper who robbed and plagued me in fifty ways, and now I am rid of her. Now, to-day, here you see me young again, made rich by the generosity of the amiable lady who has given me her hand, and I should be in the happiest frame of mind to receive you as I ought if the recollection of my young friend, whose fame is sealed by his election to the Academy, did not cast a shade of sorrow over my mind. We, all of us here," he went on raising his voice, "have been to blame as regards him. I was guilty of ingratitude when he ascribed to me the glory of his discovery and the reward of his immortal labors, not thinking that he would afterwards be taking me to England to be the cause of the happiness that has come to me so late in life: that young lady there, whose eyes I see are full of tears, foolishly accused him of atheism; that other lady, of severer countenance, responded sternly to a handsome proposal on the part of his old father, whose white hairs she should have treated with respect; Monsieur Thuillier sacrificed him to his own ambition; Monsieur Colleville did not rightly fulfil his part as a father, which he ought to have chosen the worthiest and most honest of men to be his daughter's husband; Monsieur Minard was jealous and tried to foist his son into his place. There are only two persons here, Madame Thuillier and the Abbé Gondrin, who ever did him full justice. Well now, I ask that saintly man, may we not almost doubt Divine Justice sometimes, when we see that this generous young man, the victim of us all, is at this very hour tossed by the winds and waves, leaving us for three long years in anxiety as to his safe return."

"'"Providence is most powerful, monsieur," said the Abbé,

"God will protect M. Félix Phellion in the midst of perils; and in three years I firmly hope he may be restored to his friends."

"'"But in three years," said Picot, "will it yet be time? Will Mademoiselle Colleville wait for him?"

"'"Yes, I swear it!" cried the young lady, quite carried away by feelings she could not control.

"'And then quite abashed she sat down and melted into tears.

"'"And will you, Mademoiselle Thuillier," M. Picot went on, "and you, Madame Colleville, allow this girl to wait for the man who is so worthy of her?"

"'"Yes—why yes!" every one exclaimed; for M. Picot's voice, which is deep and full, and sounded as if there were tears in his throat, had roused everybody's feelings.

"'"Then it is high time," said M. Picot, "to grant an amnesty to Providence." And coming to the door at which I had my ear—indeed, he was very near catching me:

"'"Announce M. Félix Phellion and family," said he in a very loud voice.

"'And a door opened, and five or six persons came in, who followed M. Picot into the drawing-room.

"'When she beheld her lover, Mademoiselle Colleville fainted away; but the attack only lasted a minute or two, and seeing M. Félix kneeling before her, she fell weeping into Madame Thuillier's arms, saying, "Godmother, you always bid me hope!"

"'Mademoiselle Thuillier, who, as I have always felt, is a very superior woman in spite of her hard nature and want of education, then had a happy inspiration. Just as everybody was going into the dining-room: "One minute!" says she.

"'And going up to M. Phellion, the father:

"'"Monsieur," says she, "and my old friend, I ask you in the name of Mademoiselle Colleville, our adopted daughter, to grant her your son in marriage—Monsieur Félix Phellion."

"'"Bravo, bravo!" cried every one present.

"'"Dear heaven!" said M. Félix, his eyes full of tears. "What have I done to deserve so much happiness?"

"'"You have been a good man and a Christian without knowing it," said the Abbé Gondrin.'"

At this point la Peyrade tossed down the letter.

"What, you are not going to finish it?" said Corentin, picking it up. "But in fact there is nothing more. Monsieur Henri confesses that the scene moved him deeply; he says that knowing the interest I formerly took in the marriage, he thought himself bound to let me know all the circumstances of its being settled, and, as in every police report of any length, he ends by a request, very thinly disguised, for a present in cash.—Nay, there is, by the way, a further item of importance: The English lady, in the course of the dinner, seems to have made Monsieur Picot announce that, as she has no heirs-at-law, after her husband's death and her own her whole fortune will be left to Félix, who, consequently, will be a very wealthy man."

La Peyrade had risen and was striding up and down the room.

"What is the matter?" asked Corentin.

"Nothing," replied the Provençal.

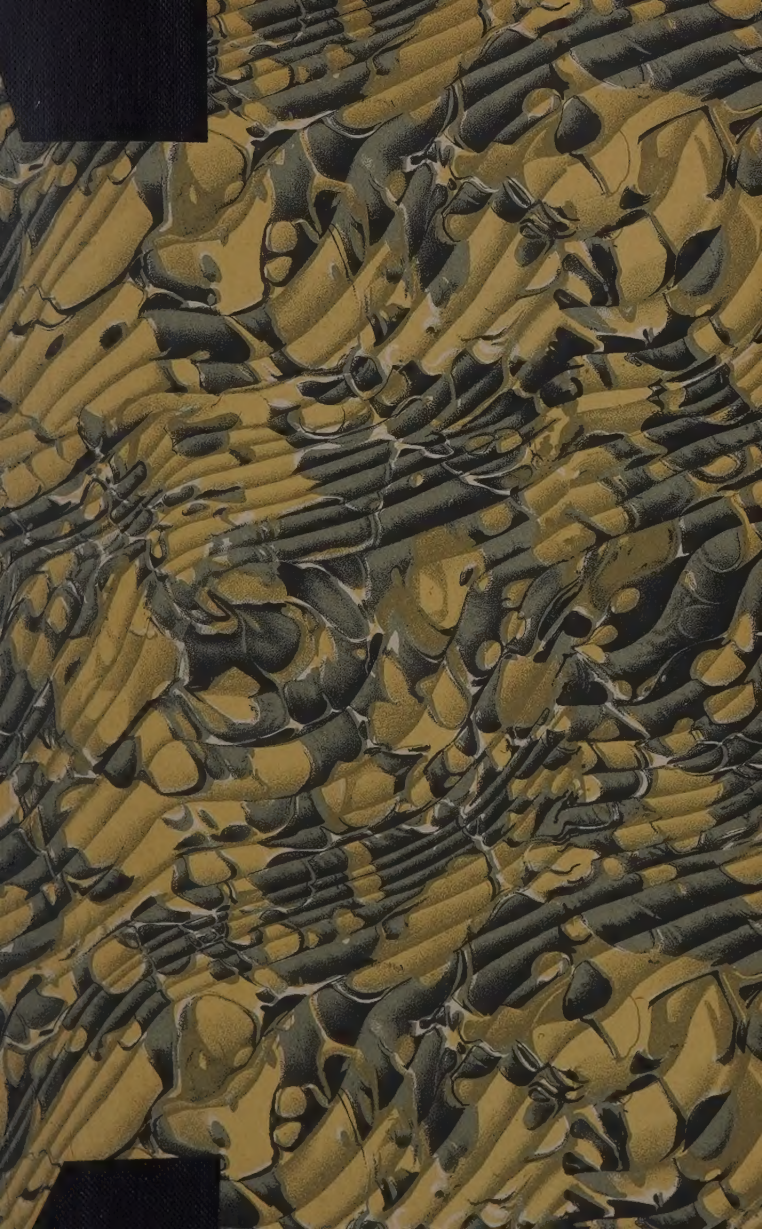
"Yes, yes, there is something. I fancy you are a little envious of that young man's good luck. But, my dear boy, allow me to point out to you that if you wished to end as he has done, you should have begun as he did. When I sent you a hundred louis to go through your law studies, I did not intend you to be my successor. I expected you to labor at the oar of your own boat, to be brave enough for hard and unrecognized toil, and then your day would have come. But you insisted on violating Fate."

"Monsieur"—said la Peyrade.

"I mean, hurrying her,—cutting the hay green. You threw yourself into journalism, then into business; then you made the acquaintance of Dutocq and Cérizet; and, honestly, I

think you very lucky to have reached the port where you have at length found refuge. Besides, you are not simple-hearted enough for such bliss as is appointed for Félix to be supreme happiness to you. These middle-class people——"

"The middle classes!" said la Peyrade. "I know them now, and I have learned to know them to my cost. They are full of the greatest absurdities—nay, and of great vices; but they have their virtues, or, to say the least, estimable qualities: in them lies all the strength of our corrupt society."

"*Your* society?" said Corentin, smiling. "You speak as if you still belonged to its ranks. You are struck off its roll, my dear boy, and you must make the best of your billet. Governments change, societies perish or grow weak; but we—we rise superior to all that, and the Police is eternal."

THE END.